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ROMAN CATHOLIC NATURAL THEOLOGY AND KARL BARTH

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis originated with the idea that the investigation of the dialogue between Karl Barth and the Roman Catholic Church on the central problem of natural and revealed theology would have been a rewarding and manageable task for one school year. It would have been rewarding, but it proved altogether unmanageable because of the profuseness of the dialogue and because almost without exception the serious and significant part of the dialogue is being carried out in German and French and it is not being translated.¹ Furthermore, it soon became obvious that just reading the sources of this dialogue was no mean task; just the bulk of Thomas' Summa and Barth's Dogmatics was staggering enough not to mention the scope, depth, and brilliance of the ideas contained in these tomes. It was soon decided that the year would by no means be wasted if it were devoted to the study of the theologies of Thomas and Barth with particular concern for the doctrine of the knowledge of God.

¹The principle untranslated works are: P. Althaus, Was ist die Taufe and Die Christliche Wahrheit; H. U. von Balthasar, Karl Barth, Darstellung und Deutung einer Theologie; H. Bouillard, Karl Barth, 3 Vols; J. J. Louet Feisser, De Strijd Kegen de Analogia entis in de theologie van Karl Barth; W. J. Aaldens, De Analogia entis in het geding; J. Fehr, Das Offenbarungsproblem in dialektischer und Thomistischer Theologie; J. Hamer, L'occasionalisme theologique de Karl Barth; etude sur sa methode dogmatique; H. Fries, Bultman, Barth und die Katholische Theologie.

Consequently, the purpose of this thesis is very simply to contrast Roman Catholic natural theology, as it was elucidated in particular by Thomas, with the revealed theology of Karl Barth. The first chapter sets forth the position of Roman Catholic natural theology. The second chapter discusses Barth's revealed theology over against that position. The last chapter contains certain comments and conclusions on the chapters which preceded it.

ROMAN CATHOLIC NATURAL THEOLOGY AND ITS RELATION TO REVELATION

This chapter presents a description of natural theology as it is held in the Roman Catholic Church. A few official statements show that the Church endorses natural theology, but since it would be impractical to piece together in a coherent pattern the various official pronouncements in order to provide a systematic presentation of natural theology, it is necessary to select one theologian to speak for the Church. Thomas Aquinas was chosen because he most consistently represents the normative view of natural theology in the Roman Catholic Church.

Since the Vatican Council of 1870 the Roman Catholic Church has become increasingly definite and clear in its affirmation of natural theology. The Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith which was formulated in that Council reads in part:

The same Holy Mother Church holds and teaches that God, the beginning and end of all things, may be certainly known by the natural light of human reason by means of created things, 'for the invisible things of Him from the Creation of the world are clearly seen being understood by the things that are made.' (Rom. 1:20)

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1Cuthbert Butler, The Vatican Council, Vol. II (New York: 1930), p. 225. To make it absolutely certain that the point will not be missed, the same affirmation of natural theology is made negatively: "If anyone shall say that the one true God, our Creator and Lord, can not be certainly known by the natural light of human reason through created things; let him be anathema." Ibid., p. 269.

Recent Papal encyclicals have enforced the Vatican Council's decree. Aeterni Patris (1879) says that metaphysics or the scientific system of natural theology,

...is rightly made use of by the wise, in a certain way tends to smooth and fortify the road to true faith, and to prepare the souls of its disciples for the fit reception of revelation; for which reason it is well called by ancient writers sometimes a stepping-stone to the Christian faith, sometimes the prelude and help of Christianity, sometimes the Gospel teacher ... Hence it is that certain truths which were either divinely proposed for belief or were bound by the closest chains to the doctrine of faith, were discovered by pagan sages with nothing but their natural reason to guide them, were demonstrated and proved by becoming ¹ arguments.

The recent encyclical Humani Generis (1950) upholds the optimistic view of reason's capacity in natural theology. "It is well known," it says, "how highly the Church regards human reason, for it falls to reason to demonstrate with certainty the existence of God, personal and one..."²

The Roman Catholic Church has come out strongly in favor of natural theology, and it has endorsed St. Thomas Aquinas almost as strongly as the theologian who should explicate its teaching of natural theology. Roman Catholic schools and seminaries are required by canon law to teach Thomas' theology. Canon 1366 reads: "The study of philosophy and theology and the teaching of these sciences to their students must be

¹Jacques Maritain, St. Thomas Aquinas (New York: 1958), p. 186.

²Ibid., p. 257.

accurately carried out by professors according to the arguments, doctrine, and principles of St. Thomas which they are inviolately to hold."¹ The encyclicals Aeterni Patris,² Doctoris Angelici,³ Studiorum Ducem and Humani Generis⁴ give abundant and unqualified endorsement to Thomas and his presentation of natural theology. In Studiorum Ducem Pius XI states that he not only heartily concurs with Pius V's enrollment of Thomas among the doctors of the Church with the title "Angelic," but he would also want to call Thomas the "Common Doctor of the Church" for the Church has adopted his philosophy for her own."⁵ He goes on to say:

The arguments adduced by St. Thomas to prove the existence of God and that God alone is subsisting Being Itself are still today, as they were in the Middle Ages, the most cogent of all arguments and clearly confirm that dogma of the Church which was solemnly proclaimed at the Vatican Council and succinctly expressed by Pius X as follows: "The certain knowledge of God as the first principle of creation and its end and demonstrable proof of His existence can be inferred, like the knowledge of a cause from its effect, by the light of the natural reason, from creation, that is to say the visible works of creation." (Motu Proprio Sacrorum Antistitum, 1910).

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¹This may be found at the beginning of: Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, Vol. I, translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, (London: 1920)

²Maritain, St. Thomas Aquinas, p. 203, pp. 208 f.

³Ibid., p. 216, p. 218.

⁴Ibid., p. 259.

⁵Ibid., p. 229.

⁶Ibid., p. 232.

Seeing that the Roman Catholic Church definitely advocates natural theology and having been introduced to the general outline of the basic principles involved in its conception of natural theology, let us turn to Thomas whom it has officially elected as its advocate and teacher.

When we turn to the great works of Thomas especially the Summa Theologica and the Summa Contra Gentiles, we are immediately struck by their scheme or structure with regard to the knowledge of God. He makes it evident that there is a twofold knowledge of God: one natural and the other revealed, and that they are related structurally, the layer of revealed theology resting upon natural theology. The first layer of knowledge is called natural theology first, because it relies on nature and created things for its data and second, because a system of knowledge is derived from the data by man's natural reason - that reason with which he is physically endowed as a human being. Revealed theology, the second layer, is distinguished from natural theology in that it derives from God's revelation and the Holy Scriptures instead of reason and the natural matter of creation. These truths surpass the grasp of man's natural reason, and he can understand them only by faith when his mind is aided by the illuminating grace given by the Holy Spirit. As Thomas says:

There is a twofold mode of truth in what we profess about God. Some truths about God exceed all the ability of the human reason. Such is the truth that God is triune. But there are some truths which the natural reason also is able to reach. Such are that God exists, that He is one, and the like. In

fact, such truths about God have been proved demonstratively by the philosophers, guided by the light of the natural reason. 1

Following the tradition of Thomas, the Vatican Council draws the distinction between the two layers in theology with precision when it says:

The Catholic Church with one consent has also ever held and does hold that there is a twofold order of knowledge, distinct both in principle and also in object; in principle, because our knowledge in the one is by natural reason, and in the other by divine faith; in object, because, besides those things to which natural reason can attain, there are proposed to our belief mysteries hidden in God, which, unless divinely revealed, cannot be known. 2

Although these two layers may be distinguished, they are not without relation to each other. Revealed theology is necessary for full knowledge of God since it contains truths not ascertainable by natural theology, but natural theology is the ground work for revealed theology. Thomas says that natural theology contains those truths "that are preambles of faith and that have a necessary place in the science of faith. Such are the truths about God that can be proved by natural reason - that God exists, that God is one; such truths about God or about His creatures, subject to philosophical proof faith presupposes."³ Another description of the interdependence

¹Thomas Aquinas, Summa Contra Gentiles, (New York: 1958) K, 3, sec. 2. (Hereafter referred to as C.G.)

²Butler, The Vatican Council, Vol. II, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith," Chapter IV, p. 23.

³Found in The Trinity and the Unicity of the Intellect by Thomas Aquinas, translated by Sister Rose Emmamuella Brennan, (St. Louis: 1946), de Trinitate, Quest. II, art. 3.

of natural and revealed theology, the one layer supporting the other is given as follows:

The existence of God and other like truths about God which can be known by natural reason, are not articles of faith, but are preambles to the articles; for faith presupposes natural knowledge, even as grace presupposes nature, and perfection supposes something that can be perfected.

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For Thomas natural theology is the necessary preamble to revealed theology. It would be just as silly to him for a two story building to have a second story and no first floor as it would be to have revealed theology without natural theology. There are four reasons why Thomas asserts that natural theology is the necessary prelude to revealed theology.

The first explanation for Thomas' two-story theology is based on his understanding of Romans 1:19, f. He believes that even those who did not know God by revelation either in the old or the new Covenant knew God nevertheless by the clues which He left in His creation. Because God's stamp was on the things which He had made, the Gentiles from the beginning of history could and did attain some knowledge of God even though it was imperfect. For a testimony of how he exegeted Romans 1:19, f., note that he uses the works of Aristotle - a pagan - as a basis for his own discussion; guided by Christian knowledge of God, Thomas establishes Aristotle where he is correct and purifies him where he is in error; he never doubts that Aristotle had at least partial knowledge of God. Furthermore, a basic assumption in his works, especially in Contra

¹Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, I, 2, art. 2.

Gentiles, is that he and his readers have the natural knowledge of God as a common ground for discussion; with this common knowledge as a basis for debate he goes on to argue the truth of the Catholic faith. In Romans 1:19, f., Thomas not only sees that knowledge of God is possible naturally without the aid of revelation, but he also sees the way in which natural knowledge is attained. He writes:

It is written (Romans 1:19), "That which is known of God," namely, what can be known of God by natural reason, "is manifest in them."

Our natural knowledge begins from sense. Hence our natural knowledge can go as far as it can be led by sensible things. But our mind cannot be led by sense so far as to see the essence of God... But...we can be led from them [God's effects in creation] so far as to know of God whether he exists. 1

Two passages in which he comments on Romans 1:20 follow:

Now these two - namely, eternal and temporal - are related to our knowledge in this way, that one of them is the means of knowing the other. For by way of discovery, we come through knowledge of temporal things to that of things eternal, according to the words of the Apostle (Romans 1:20), "The invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." 2

The Apostle says: [same quotation of Romans 1:20 as above]. But this would not be unless the existence of God could be demonstrated through the things that are made; for the first thing we must know of anything is, whether it exists. 3

Romans 1:20 supplies Thomas with Scriptural support for his epistemological method which will be discussed below.

Suffice it to say for the moment that Thomas thinks that man

1Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I, 12, art. 12.

2Ibid., I, 79, art. 9.

3Ibid., I, 2, art. 2; c.f., C.G., I, 12, sec. 6 and I, 20, sec. 23

can know by unaided reason an invisible and transcendent God by starting with His visible effects in creation readily perceivable by the senses and then working up to a higher knowledge of the cause of the effects by intellectual abstraction. In this manner God's existence can be demonstrated.

Thomas' understanding of Romans 1:19, f., leads him to include natural theology as a prelude to his sacred theology because it supports his belief that all men have some knowledge of God and that this knowledge provides a common ground upon which to build a more perfect knowledge of God. Romans 1:20 also sanctioned his method of procedure in natural theology; that of starting with creation and working up to the Creator.

In order to show that Thomas' interpretation of this passage is not unusual in the Roman Catholic Church but in fact stands near the source of a constant stream which continues to the present time, let us recall that the Vatican Council's decree on natural theology finds Scriptural support in Romans 1:19, f. That "God the beginning and end of all things, may be certainly known by the natural light of human reason, by means of created things, 'for the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made' (Romans 1:20)," is what the decree says and it is in full agreement with Thomas' interpretation. Further evidence that Thomas' line of thought on this Scriptural passage is followed at present in the Roman Catholic Church is provided by this interpretation written by Etienne Gilson, a highly respected Thomist Theologian:

[Paul] is concerned to recognize a certain natural knowledge of God even in the Gentiles. When, in the Epistle to the Romans (1:19-20), he affirms that the eternal power and divinity of God may be known from created things, he affirms by implication the possibility of a purely rational knowledge of God in the Greeks, and at the same time lays the foundation of all the natural theologies which will later arise in the bosom of Christianity. 1

In addition to the Scriptural basis for his use of natural theology as a preamble to sacred theology, Thomas has another reason for building the one upon the other. This reason is that he is following the principle which he asserts time and again: gratia non tollit naturam sed perficit, grace does not destroy nature but perfects it. From the passage in the *Summa Theologica*, I, 2, art. 2, cited previously,² we have already seen how he applies this principle in linking up natural and revealed theology. A further evidence of how this principle operates in this regard can be seen from the following:

...it must be said that gifts of grace are added to those of nature in such a way that they do not destroy the latter, but rather perfect them; wherefore also the light of faith, which is gratuitously infused into our minds, does not destroy the natural light of cognition, which is in us by nature. For although the natural light of the human mind is insufficient to reveal these truths revealed by faith, yet it is impossible that those things which God has manifested to us by faith should be contrary to those which are evident to us by natural knowledge... Now, as sacred doctrine is founded upon the light of faith, so philosophy depends upon the light of natural reason; wherefore it is impossible that philosophical truths are contrary to those that are of faith; but they are deficient as compared to them.

 1 Etienne Gilson, The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy, (New York: 1940) p. 26.

² See page 6.

Nevertheless, they incorporate some similitudes of those higher truths, and some things that are preparatory for them, just as nature is the preamble to grace.

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This principle (fundamental, of course, to his moral theology²) provides an illuminating clue to the understanding of his theological outlook. While Thomas does not overlook the factor of discontinuity, he stresses the continuity between reason and faith, nature and grace, material and spiritual, natural knowledge and revealed knowledge of God. In all of these polar tensions, Thomas makes the "both-and" resolution rather than the "either-or." Because he sees this continuity, he is ready to affirm that natural theology can lead up to revealed theology.

Thomas employs natural theology as a prelude to revealed theology for a third reason. The historical situation in which he found himself made it almost imperative for him to look to reason as an authoritative criterion, and as he did, he consequently strengthened the position of natural theology since in it reason is the important factor. In the first place, as a theologian of the Church, he found himself faced with an apologetic task the proportions of which had not been equaled since Constantine. Thomas had to use reason in writing to his audience of Jews, Moslems and pagans because they did not accept Scripture as authoritative and so reason remained the only alternative authority common to Christian and non-Christian.³

¹Aquinas, The Trinity and the Unity of the Intellect, Quest. II, art. 3; c.f., Summa Theologiae, I a, I, 8, art. 2.

²Walter Beach and H. Richard Niebuhr, Christian Ethics, (New York: 1955), Chapter 7.

³SC.G., I, 2, sec. 3.

Coupled with the challenge from the outside was the problem the Church had inside its own walls. For the Church the Patristic literature had a great deal of authority, but an abundance of contradictions could be found among the writings of the Fathers, and when the incidents of citing opposing proof texts became commonplace, the authority of the Fathers was threatened. To keep the authority of the Fathers from being undermined altogether, Thomas appealed to reason as a higher authority which should serve as a criterion in reading the Fathers.¹

For these two historical reasons, Thomas was obliged to bolster the prestige of reason as an authority. As he strengthened the cause of reason in the fields of apologetics and patristics, he also strengthened reason's position in systematic theology. As he appealed to the natural reason of the Gentiles to convince them of the truth of Christianity, he not only enhanced the authority of reason, but also the power of reason. Thomas was saying that there were certain things Gentiles could know by natural reason, and if they were led by sound rational arguments built upon the foundation of this natural knowledge, they could become convinced of the truth of the Catholic faith. Thus having this high opinion of the authority and capabilities of natural reason, he could unhesitatingly include natural theology in his system as a prelude to revealed theology.

¹Edwin A. Burt, Types of Religious Philosophy, (New York: 1951), pp. 93 f.

The fourth reason why Thomas uses natural theology as a prelude to theology is his epistemology. Thomas borrowed much from Aristotle but he was especially indebted to the ancient philosopher for his epistemology.

Aristotle distinguished himself from Plato by asserting that man's knowledge must originate in the senses if it is to be certain. His criticism of Plato's epistemology which assumed that knowledge was gained by man's mind rationally intuiting ideas was that it could not be verified; when knowledge began with the senses, it was empirically certain and could be verified by all men. Thomas adopts this principle that knowledge begins with the senses and frequently reiterates it.

An example of one such statement of the maxim is this :

...according to its manner of knowing in the present life, the intellect depends on the senses for the origin of knowledge; and so those things that do not fall under the senses cannot be grasped by the human intellect except in so far as the knowledge of them is gathered from sensible things. 1

Starting with sensible things, it is possible to transcend the singular or particular knowledge of material forms which the senses perceive and to attain truths which are universal. This is possible because being a union of body and soul or mind, man can perceive material forms with his corporeal organs or senses, and then his mind or active intellect can abstract universal truths from these material forms by lifting them above their particularizing or

¹C.G., I, 3, sec. 3.

individuating matter.¹

To facilitate an understanding of this reasoning process, an exegesis of a relevant passage in the Summa Theologica might be helpful.

But in Aristotle's opinion, which experience corroborates, our intellect in its present state of life has a natural relationship to the natures of material things; and therefore it can only understand by turning to the phantasms.

2

First of all, this shows Thomas' dependence on Aristotle for the principle that knowledge begins with sense perception. Secondly, the passage brings up the important word "phantasms." Phantasms are images produced in the common sense of a man when he perceives material objects with his senses; technically, they are "images of particular things impressed or preserved in corporeal organs."³ These images provide man's intellect with the data from which it can abstract a universal truth.

¹Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I, 12, art. 4: Now our soul possesses two cognitive powers; one is the act of a corporeal organ, which naturally knows only the singular. But there is another kind of cognitive power in the soul called the intellect; and this is not the act of any corporeal organ. Wherefore the intellect naturally knows natures which exist only in individual matter; not as they are in such individual matter, but according as they are abstracted there from by the considering act of the intellect; hence it follows that through the intellect we can understand these objects as universal; and this is beyond the power of sense.

²Ibid., I, 88, art. 1.

³Etienne Gilson, The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, (New York: 1956) p. 217.

A clear explanation of the process of abstraction from phantasm is this:

The active intellect...causes the phantasms received from the senses to be actually intelligible, by a process of abstraction. Abstraction is the process by which the particular and concrete data of the phantasms is made universal. The active intellect focuses on the universal and puts the particular in the background. ¹

A further epistemological principle which Thomas borrowed from Aristotle is that there is an essential likeness or similarity between the knowing subject and the known object, or to say the same thing in another way, the object is known according to the mode of the knower.² Man reflects the fact that he is a limited being by knowing in a limited way. Because man is a mixture of corporeal and spiritual, he cannot know universal truths or purely intelligible substances immediately or directly. He can achieve knowledge of these higher truths and substances only indirectly or discursively by way of abstraction from sensible data.

Wherefore the proper object of the angelic intellect, which is entirely separate from a body is an intelligible substance separate from a body, whereas the proper object of the human intellect which is united to a body, is a quiddity of nature existing in corporeal matter; and through such natures of visible things it rises to a certain knowledge of things invisible. ³

¹Walter Farrell, A Companion to the Summa, Vol. I, (New York: 1941) p. 330.

²Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, II - II, 1, art. 2: "The thing known is in the knower according to the mode of the knower. Now the mode proper to the human intellect is to know the truth by synthesis and analysis.

³Ibid., I, 84, art. 7.

Especially is it true in the case of man's knowledge of God that man cannot know directly the substance of God which is the most spiritual and purely intelligible substance of all. Man can know God only indirectly because man's intellect can never completely disengage itself of its material attachments since it is bound to the body and its senses. This is not to say with the Platonists that the body is bad because it hinders knowledge; on the contrary, the body which enables sense perception is good because it ensures certain knowledge. The body's senses provide data from which man's intellect mounts discursively by way of demonstration to knowledge of God. But this knowledge of God is not like God's knowledge of Himself because only He who is perfectly spiritual can know Himself who is a purely intelligible being not mixed with matter. Man's knowledge remains imperfect because although the intellect can abstract truths from sense data by putting the particular in the background, it can never completely purge its knowledge of the particularizing influence of matter.¹ Man's knowledge cannot exceed the bounds of the sensible order from which it takes its start;² and thus he is not able to achieve a direct apprehension of immaterial essences like God. He can "claim no more than to form some very imperfect representation of the intelligible from sensible nature or guididity."³ Even though he adds one limited idea of God to another in the process of his discursive demonstration of God's existence and nature, he will not be able to know God directly as God knows Himself;

¹Bartt, Types of Religious Philosophy, p. 122.

²C.G., III, 47, sec. 9.

³Gilson, The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, p. 221.

his combined ideas will still be limited by the sensible order. Just because man is part of the material order and he begins his knowledge with the senses, his knowledge of God can be true, certain and demonstrable but it is also indirect, imperfect and limited.

Another epistemological principle which Thomas took over from Aristotle is that the existence and nature of a cause can be known from its effect by means of a posteriori deduction. Thomas adopted this way of knowing instead of the alternative a priori method of deducing effects from their cause which was advocated by Plato, St. Augustine and St. Anselm and was the traditional one in the Church in Thomas' day. Thomas opposed a a priori deduction because he believed that it was impossible for any created intellect to see directly the essence of God, the First Cause, because the divine being transcends the human being.¹ He chose a posteriori deduction which assumes that man is able to reason from effects in creation to their cause which ultimately is above creation because he thought that man being corporeal in nature is suited to know immediately and certainly only what is perceivable by the senses and that which is abstracted therefrom. What is perceivable by the senses are material and created effects, and from this knowledge of the material or particular, the mind can abstract a higher knowledge and reach the cause of the effect. Thomas says:

Demonstration can be made in two ways: one is through the cause and is called a priori, and this is to argue from what is prior absolutely.

¹Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I, 2, art. 2; c.f., C.G., I, 12, sec. 9.

The other is through the effect, and is called a demonstration a posteriori; this is to argue from what is better known to us than its cause, from the effect we proceed to the knowledge of the cause. And from every effect the existence of its proper cause can be demonstrated, so long as its effects are better known to us; because since every effect depends upon its cause, if the effect exists, the cause must pre-exist. Hence the existence of God, in so far as it is not self-evident to us can be demonstrated from those of His effects which are known to us. 1

Thomas' epistemology is influenced by other factors which support the principles already mentioned. We will discuss these more fully later, but brief mention of them will fill out the present discussion. He was influenced by Dionysius the Areopagite whose via negationis enabled him to extract imperfections from his conceptions of God. Another important element in his epistemology is the notion of analogy which provided that an effect was like its cause. If an effect was like its cause, then similarly God's effects must be like Him. This use of analogy is invaluable to Thomas because man, unable to know God directly by intuition, would have been unable to know anything of God in a positive way if he did not have the use of analogy. 2

Thomas' epistemology fits in neatly with his predilection for natural theology. First of all, his indebtedness to the

1Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I, 2, art. 2.

2Another factor which influenced his epistemology but which cannot be discussed is his vivid picture of a hierarchy of being inherited from Aristotle and Dionysius. This hierarchy determined the degree to which each being could know anything; it also supported the notion of analogy since it provided all beings were related according to their rank on the ladder of being.

pagan philosophers either induced or followed from his respect for natural theology. His emphasis on the three principles first of knowing through sense perception, second of the correspondence between the knower and the known necessitating that man a corporeal being start with matter before his intellect abstracts from it, and third of knowing the cause by first analyzing the effect - all contributed to the prestige of natural theology. They supported natural theology because the focus of man's attention was brought to bear first on creation and because the powers of reason were enhanced. Finally his epistemology supported natural theology because everything lent itself to that upward tendency, the ascendent movement which is so vital to natural theology. Notice that in knowing, man moves from the material up to the spiritual, from effects up to the cause, from the particular up to the universal. Reason starts at the bottom with sense data and works up to abstract ideas. Man starts with data supplied from creation and with his reason works up to the Creator.¹

It is no wonder that Thomas incorporated natural theology as a prelude to revealed theology. If reasoning from creation was a perfectly adequate and legitimate way of knowing God, Thomas could see no reason why there should not be two ways, by reason and by faith, to know God. Natural theology

¹The whole meaning and the history of man's urge to ascend from creation to Creator is brought out forcefully by Anders Nygren in Agape and Eros; note that the erotic tendency influences the intellect just as it does the emotion.

being firmly grounded in sound epistemology provided a solid base for revealed theology.

Natural and revealed theology are the two ways to know God, but to get an idea of the difference between these two ways, picture their "motion." If the knowledge of God is likened to a ladder, these two ways of knowing can be seen as opposite sides of the same ladder. Natural theology, as already mentioned, starts at the bottom with creation and climbs up to the top with God; revealed theology starts at the top with God and works down to the bottom to creation. As Thomas says:

...the two kinds of teaching do not follow the same order. For in the teaching of philosophy, which considers creatures in themselves and leads us from them to the knowledge of God, the first consideration is about creatures; the last, of God. But in the teaching of faith, which considers creatures only in their relation to God, the consideration of God comes first, that of creatures afterwards. 1

Another passage gives a clearer picture of the up and down movement in theology "...natural reason ascends to a knowledge of God through creatures and, conversely, the knowledge of faith descends from God to us by divine revelation."²

Both natural and revealed theology discuss truths of God which are known with certainty, but there is a difference between the two ways because the truths of natural theology are demonstrable whereas the truths of revealed theology are not. Because the truths of natural theology lie within the

¹C.G., II, 4, sec. 5.

²C.G., IV, 1, sec. 11.

realm of the possibilities of human reason, they may be proven logically, but because revealed truths are beyond the capabilities of human reason, they can not be proven. They may be defended from attack only by the authority of Scripture and by probable arguments showing a consistency with natural theology.¹

Notice in the following passage that the arguments of natural theology are intended to be convincing proofs whereas the arguments in revealed theology are not:

Now to make the first kind of divine truth (i.e., natural theology) known, we must proceed through demonstrative arguments, by which our adversary may become convinced. However, since such arguments are not available for the second kind of divine truth (i.e., revealed theology), our intention should not be to convince our adversary by arguments... Nevertheless, there are certain likely arguments that should be brought forth in order to make divine truth known. This should be done for the training and consolation of the faithful, and not with any idea of refuting those who are adversaries. For the very inadequacy of the arguments would rather strengthen them in their error, since they would imagine that our acceptance of the truth of faith was based in such weak arguments.

2

Since it is true that Gentiles can be convinced by the logical arguments of Christian natural theology, it may be said that natural theology is dependent solely on the authority of reason. However, faith does enter in because while it is theoretically possible that Gentiles could arrive at the same conclusions as the Christian natural theologian without his

¹C.G., I, p, sec. 2 and sec. 3.

²Ibid., sec. 2.

guidance, it is highly improbable.¹ The Christian's natural theology is guided by faith and this guidance prevents all the errors in to which the Gentile's natural theology would fall if left by itself in its weakness.² For the Christian who is proposing a natural theology, faith, says Gilson "...provides him with a criterion, a norm of judgment, a principle of discernment and selection, allowing him to restore rational truth to itself by purging away the errors that encumber it."³ This does not mean that the arguments of Christian natural theology must be accepted on the authority of faith in order to be convincing. The arguments are meant to be convincing apart from faith solely on the grounds of generally valid logical demonstration derived from sense perceptions available to all men, and the conclusions of the arguments may be accepted solely on the basis of natural reason. Faith is involved in natural theology only as an aid to the Christian theologian; it helps him keep his natural theology free from error and consonant with revealed theology. Natural theology then is concerned with the "truth which faith professes and reason investigates."⁴

¹The weakness of the intellect will be discussed below; suffice it to say that revelation was necessary because the intellect was weak.

²C.G., I, 4.

³Gilson, The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy, p. 31. C.f., Maritain, Aeterni Patris, p. 193 "...in the density of ignorance and in the flood-tide of error, holy faith, like a friendly star, shines down upon his path and points out to him the fair gate of truth beyond all danger of wandering."

⁴C.G., I, 9, sec. 3.

Our task now is to summarize briefly the way in which natural theology operates and the conclusions which it derives as they are found in Thomas' work. In his words, "We are aiming, then, to set out following the way of the reason and to inquire into what the human reason can investigate about God."¹

First of all, natural theology is concerned with the proof of God's existence. Before supplying the proof of His existence, Thomas establishes the necessity for proving God's existence and then he chooses the types of proof he will use and the type he will reject.

Before he proves the existence of God, he answers the question whether God is immediately evident or not. If God is immediately evident, as some think, then there is no point in proving what is already known without demonstration.

Whether or not a theologian attempts to prove the existence of God depends upon his concept of being. Broadly speaking, the concept of being can be seen from two distinct points of view. On the one hand, in the Platonic school, being may be described as the essence of an existence; here, being is first thought of as essence. On the other hand, in the Aristotelian school, being is described as the existence, actual or possible, of an essence; here being is first considered as that which exists.²

In the Platonic school, the being of a thing is thought

¹C.G., I, p. sec. 4.

²Gerald Smith, Natural Theology, (New York: 1951) p. 51.

to be necessarily known because it would be impossible to say that a thing is without being able to say what it is. Moreover, something that is cannot change since it would no longer be what it was and would be about to become something else which as yet it is not. And if the thing does not remain what it was but changes and becomes something else, it can not be known, and if it is not known, it can not be said to be.¹

Being which is qualified by the necessity of being immutable and intelligible is called essence.² It is with essence that the members of this school concern themselves with first because to them essence has the possibility of being more immediately conceived by the intellect.³ Existent realities, because they are subject to change, are considered after their essences are known; they are deduced from the knowledge of their essences. Hence, in this school, the method of demonstration proceeds according to the order of knowing and is therefore, a priori, from the one to the many, the universal to the particular, the cause to its effects.⁴ However, while a discursive process is needed for the intellect to grasp existent realities, it is not necessary when the mind grasps essence. According to St. Augustine a great figure in this essentialist school, the mind intuitively knows essence; essence is as immediately known to

¹Gilson, The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, p. 48.

²Ibid., p. 30 and p. 48.

³Smith, Natural Theology, p. 33.

⁴Ibid., p. 55.

the mind as light is immediately visible to the eye.¹

In the Aristotelian school, on the other hand, being is considered existentially rather than essentially. To be the things that are is what it means to be.² The things that are are the existential realities which are the immediate objects of knowledge because these are the particular, material realities which man according to his natural reasoning structure knows first by sense perception.³ In this school, the theologian following the order of knowing moves from the existent to the essence, arguing a posteriori from the many to the one, the particular to the universal, the effect to the cause.

A theologian's commitment to one school or to the other will effect the way he deals with the proof of the existence of God. The difference is most strikingly apparent in the comparison of the opposing positions of St. Anselm and St. Thomas.

St. Anselm is one of the most formidable proponents of the Platonic school. He argues that once anyone knows what the definition⁴ of God's essence is, he will know at the same

¹Gilson, The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, p. 54.

²Smith, Natural Theology, p. 28.

³See above pages 12 ff.

⁴"The definition of essence" is a redundancy in the sense that Gilson defines essence: "In so far as substance can be conceived and defined, it is called 'essence.'" Essence, therefore, is only substance as susceptible of definition. Gilson, The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, p. 30.

time that God exists. In other words, once the term "God" is understood, the existence of God is self-evident.

His famous ontological argument for the existence of God begins with a prayer in which he addresses God saying: "We believe that Thou art a being than which nothing greater can be conceived." The argument continues:

Or is there no such nature, since the fool hath said in his heart, there is no God? (Psalm XIV, 1). But, at any rate, this very fool, when he hears of this being of which I speak - a being than which nothing greater can be conceived - understands what he hears, and what he understands is in his understanding; although he does not understand it to exist...

Hence, even the fool is convinced that something exists in the understanding, at least, than which nothing greater can be conceived. For, when he hears of this, he understands it. And whatever is understood, exists in the understanding. And assuredly that, than which nothing greater can be conceived, cannot exist in the understanding alone; then it can be conceived to exist in reality, which is greater.

Therefore, if that, than which nothing greater can be conceived, exists in the understanding alone, the very being, than which nothing greater can be conceived, is one, than which a greater can be conceived. But obviously this is impossible. Hence, there is no doubt that there exists a being, than which nothing greater can be conceived, and it exists both in the understanding and in reality.

1

In short, Anselm's ontological argument is the setting forth of the idea of a perfect being which must exist not only in the mind but in reality because perfection implies existence; if the being did not exist it would not be perfect. Thus the very notion of the being of God makes His existence self-evident.

 1st. Anselm, translated by Sidney Norton Deane, (Chicago: 1903), "Proslogion", pp. 7 f.

St. Thomas' rejection of Anselm's ontological argument is really not very ingenious; he merely rejects Anselm's essentialistic premises and reasserts his own existential pre-suppositions. In the following discussion of Aquinas' rebuttal of Anselm, we can see how he would answer all essentialists.

His first objection is that in fact men do not immediately know the essence of God.¹ When it is remembered that sensible things are the only beings directly or immediately accessible to our knowledge, then it becomes obvious that just as men do not immediately know that the whole is greater than its parts unless they have seen the whole and the parts,² so also men have to be led discursively to the knowledge of God so that they can conceive of that which God is.

Typical of Thomas' rejection of the essentialist position and the reassertion of his own existential position is this statement:

For just as it is evident to us that a whole is greater than a part of itself, so to those seeing the divine essence in itself it is supremely self-evident that God exists because His essence is His being. But, because we are not able to see His essence, we arrive at the knowledge of His being, not through God Himself, but through His effects. 3

The second objection is that thinking does not make it so. Just because someone understands the term "God" as that

¹C.G., I, 11, sec. 2.

²Gilson, The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, p. 450, footnote 37.

³C.G., I, 11, sec. 5.

perfect being which must exist, it does not mean that in fact the perfect being does exist. Granted that the term exists in the mind, it does not immediately follow that than which nothing greater can be conceived exists elsewhere in reality than in the mind. The thought of God does not guarantee His existence.¹

For the existence of God to be as self-evident as the essentialists affirm, the essence of God would have to be known directly, and Thomas simply will not grant the essentialist's presupposition that God's essence is immediately known. The only things that are immediately known are the existing sensible things, and these are not God but only His effects. Therefore, the most that men can know of God's essence is that it exists, and this must be shown by a discursive method of demonstrating a posteriori from His effects to Him who is their first cause.

The conclusions of Anselm's and Aquinas' arguments both agree, of course, that God's essence is to exist, but they disagree on the method of reaching that conclusion. "Proceeding from essence to existence," Gilson explains,

we have to look for the proof of God's existence in the notion of God. Proceeding from existence to essence, we have to use proofs for the existence of God to form a notion of His essence. St. Thomas holds this second point of view. After establishing the existence of a first cause, he will establish, through the very proofs of its existence, that this first cause is the being

¹C.G., I, 11, sec. 3.

than which none greater can be conceived and which cannot be conceived as not existing. The existence of God will, then, be a demonstrated certitude, and at no time the results of an intuition. 1

So it is that Thomas denies the ontological argument and its underlying presupposition that the existence of God is self-evident. He maintains that God's existence must be proved by a posteriori demonstration.

Let us now set forth Thomas' proofs as he presented them most succinctly in the Summa Theologica:

The existence of God can be proved in five ways. The first and more manifest way is the argument from motion. It is certain, and evident to our senses, that in the world some things are in motion. Now whatever is in motion is put in motion by another, for nothing can be in motion except it is in potentiality to that towards which it is in motion; whereas a thing moves inasmuch as it is in act. For motion is nothing else than the reduction of something in a potentiality to actuality, except by something in a state of actuality. Thus that which is actually hot, as fire, makes wood, which is potentially hot, to be actually hot, and thereby moves and changes it. Now it is not possible that the same thing should be at once in actuality and potentiality in the same respect, but only in different respects. For what is actually hot cannot simultaneously be potentially hot; but it is simultaneously potentially cold. It is therefore impossible that in the same respect and in the same way a thing should be both mover and moved, i.e., that it should move itself. Therefore, whatever is in motion must be put in motion by another. If that by which it is put in motion be itself put in motion by another, and that by another again. But this cannot go on to infinity, because then there would be no first mover, and, consequently, no other mover, seeing that subsequent movers move only inasmuch as they are put in motion by the first mover; as the staff moves only because it is put in motion by the hand. Therefore it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, put in motion by no other; and this everyone understands to be God.

 1Gilson, The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, p. 57.

The second way is from the nature of the efficient cause. In the world of sense we find there is an order of efficient causes. There is no case known (neither is it, indeed, possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself; for so it would be prior to itself, which is impossible. Now in efficient causes it is not possible to go on to infinity, because in all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause, and the intermediate is the cause of the ultimate cause, whether the intermediate cause be several, or one only. Now to take away the cause is to take away the effect. Therefore, if there be no first cause among efficient causes, there will be no ultimate, nor any intermediate cause. But if in efficient causes it is possible to go on to infinity, there will be no first efficient cause, neither will there be an ultimate effect, nor any intermediate efficient causes; all of which is plainly false. Therefore it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, to which everyone gives the name of God.

The third way is taken from possibility and necessity, and runs thus. We find in nature things that are possible to be and not to be, since they are found to be generated, and to corrupt, and consequently, they are possible to be and not to be. But it is impossible for these always to exist for that which is possible not to be at some time is not. Therefore, if everything is possible not to be, then at one time there could have been nothing in existence. Now if this were true, even now there would be nothing in existence, because that which does not exist only begins to exist by something already existing. Therefore, if at one time nothing was in existence, it would have been impossible for anything to have begun to exist; and thus even now nothing would be in existence - which is absurd. Therefore, not all beings are merely possible, but there must exist something the existence of which is necessary. But every necessary thing either has its necessity caused by another, or not. Now it is impossible to go on to infinity in necessary things which have their necessity caused by another, as has been already proved in regard to efficient causes. Therefore we cannot but postulate the existence of some being having of itself its own necessity, and not receiving it from another, but rather causing in others their necessity. This all men speak of as God.

The fourth way is taken from the gradation to be found in things. Among beings there are some more and some less good, true, noble, and the like. But 'more' and 'less' are predicated of

different things, according as they resemble in their different ways something which is the maximum, as a thing is said to be hotter according as it more nearly resembles that which is hottest; so that there is something which is truest, something best, something noblest, and, consequently, something which is uttermost being, for those things that are greatest in truth are greatest in being, as it is written in Metaph. II. Now the maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus; as fire, which is the maximum of heat, is the cause of all hot things. Therefore there must be something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection; and this we call God.

The fifth way is taken from the governance of the world. We see that things which lack intelligence, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result. Hence it is plain that not fortuitously, but designedly, do they achieve their end. Now whatever lacks intelligence cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence; as the arrow is shot to its mark by the archer. Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God. 1

Since our interest in these proofs lies only in the bald facts of their conclusions and of their method of procedure as a part of natural theology, we will not pause to examine the logic of their steps but will pass on to a mere mention of their salient features.

The first four proofs are called cosmological arguments because they assert that the only way to account for the existence of the world is to affirm the existence of God; the last is the teleological proof which argues that the coherent design of the world cannot be explained unless there is God who designs it. The conclusions of these five arguments

¹Thomas, Summa Theologica, I, 2, art. 3.

are as follows: 1. the unmoved first mover or the unchangeable origin of all change; 2. the first efficient cause which accounts for all subsequent causes and effects; 3. the necessary ground of all contingent things; 4. the perfect source of all the less perfect finite things; 5. the intelligent governor of the adaptive order in the world.

At the end of each of these arguments from the Summa Theologica,¹ Thomas identifies the conclusion of the proposition with the being which "everyone understands to be God." Clearly he meant that the five proofs were different ways of establishing the existence of the same supreme being.² Thus, by these arguments, he has reached the supreme conclusion: he believes he has demonstrated the existence of God. He rests his arguments on reason alone: they are empirical because their data which is gathered by the senses is available to all people; and the arguments moving from effects to cause are logical. Nowhere is an appeal made

¹In The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, p. 64. Gilson says that Thomas did not want us to accept as self-evident the identification of God with the conclusion of any one proof; rather we should wait until the attributes of this supreme existing being are demonstrated and then say that the whole broad picture taken as a piece is God. This is not what Thomas says in the Summa Theologica, but even if he says it elsewhere, the fact remains that no matter how long it is put off, the equation is made between God and the conclusion of man's demonstrations from sensible things.

²Ibid., p. 67.

to revelation in support of the arguments.¹

Now that the existence of a supreme being has been established, it is necessary to "investigate the properties of this being."² To know something of the character of this being we move now into the area of the attributes of God. This is a difficult area because, as mentioned previously, we can know nothing directly of the essence of this being, because "by its immensity, the divine substance surpasses every form that our intellect reaches."³ There is no need to despair, however, because there are two principle means at our disposal by which we can describe the essence of God indirectly. These two ways are remotion or via negationis and analogy.

Remotion or via negationis is the negative way of reaching the attributes of the supreme being. Although men are unable to apprehend directly what the being of God is, they are able to say what it is not. Something definite can be known about the divine being by seeing how it is different

¹Of course, as it has often been said, the identification of the conclusions of the arguments with God involves a leap of faith or at least is in itself an ontological argument; in other words, Thomas could not know that that is what he means by God unless he has already assumed it from another source. Nevertheless, it remains true that Thomas did not think that he was relying in the slightest on revelation in the proofs; he thought every step in the arguments, including the last one, was strictly logical. c.f., J. V. Langmead Casserley, The Christian in Philosophy, (New York: 1949) p. 84.

²C.G., I, 14, sec. 1.

³Ibid., sec. 2.

from all else that is known. The more that is known that can not be attributed to the divine being, the more complete will be the knowledge of the divine being. "We approach nearer to a knowledge of God," Thomas says, "according as through our intellect we are able to remove more and more things from Him."¹

The most obvious example of this negative approach of the via negationis is the first one given in the Contra Gentiles: that God is eternal. The first proof established the fact that God is immutable; since God does not change, He does not begin or end, and that which is without beginning or end is eternal.² In the same chapter, he gives other ways in which the idea of time can not be attributed to God; this rejection of a finite quality like time to describe the divine essence is typical of the negative way of approaching the attributes. In the same manner, potency is discarded from the description of God; there is nothing latent in God; everything is actualized or realized, and thus, He is pure act.³ Matter, composition, and a physical body can not be attributed to God; He is spiritual.⁴ Furthermore, since there is no composition in God, He is His essence; He is completely what He is; there is nothing extraneous to His essence in Him.⁵

¹C.G., I, 14, sec. 2.

²Ibid., chap. 15, sec. 2.

³Ibid., chap. 16, sec. 2.

⁴Ibid., chaps. 17, 18, and 20, sec. 2.

⁵Ibid., chap. 21, sec. 2.

That God is His essence means that God is His being. How this conclusion is reached can be seen from the following argument which is typical of Thomas' method of combining the via negationis with the proofs which he has already given:

Everything, furthermore, exists because it has being. A thing whose essence is not its being, consequently, is not through its essence¹ but by participation in something, namely, being itself. But that which is through participation² in something cannot be the first being,³ because prior to it is the being in which it participates in order to be. But God is the first being, with nothing prior to Him. His essence is therefore, His being. 4

Because God's being is His essence, He is perfect. There is no potency in Him; He is pure act and "each thing is perfect according as it is in act."⁵ God's perfection means that He lacks no excellence proper to any thing, but in Him is every perfection of every thing. "God ... who is His being ... has being according to the whole power of being itself. Hence, He cannot lack any excellence that belongs to any given thing."⁶

Threshing out the finite limitations in our description of God, the via negationis helps us to know something about

¹I.E., Does not cause itself to exist by its essence.

²I.e., Caused by being in which it participates.

³I.e., The first cause as proved by the arguments.

⁴C.G., I, 22, sec. 9.

⁵Ibid., sec. 2.

⁶Ibid., chap. 28, sec. 6.

His nature, especially His transcendence and perfection. But just because it helps us to see the difference between this perfect being and its imperfect effects from which our knowledge derives, it brings about the problem of whether our reason is able to say anything further about this wholly different being. The question is how can the names or words which we use to apply to created things also be used to describe the Creator. For example, how can such names as unity, being, goodness, intelligence, will, and life be attributed to God when they can also be attributed to creatures? The question is answered by the use of analogy.

The analogical is the mean between the univocal and the equivocal.¹ When a word is used univocally to describe two different objects, the word is used in an identical sense because the objects described are in a one to one relationship. For example, when the word "tree" is used to describe an elm and an oak, "tree" is used univocally because its application is identical in each case. When a word is used equivocally to describe two different objects, the word has two distinct meanings because the objects described are in no way related. The fact that the same word is used for both objects happens only by chance. For example, when the word "pen" is used to describe a writing instrument and an enclosure, "pen" is used equivocally because there is no relation between the two senses in which it is applied. The meaning of the word is different in each case because the objects

 Thomas, Summa Theologica, I, 13, art. 5.

described bear no resemblance or relation to each other. Between these two extremes, stands analogy. When a word is used analogically to describe two different objects, the word has a similar meaning in each case because there is some resemblance and relation between the objects. The word is applied to each object neither in an identical sense nor in a totally unrelated sense; it is applied in a like sense. For example, "good" can be used analogically to describe pants and food because good is used in a similar sense in each case; the pants are good according to what pants ought to be, and food is good according to what food ought to be. Pants and food are not identical but they are related by the fact that they have a similar excellence though each according to its own mode of being perfect.

Thomas asserts that men can speak of God analogically because there is some likeness of creatures to God. He argues that an effect is similar though not identical to its cause because a cause produces its like;¹ for example, a man never produces anything but a man, and a warm thing always warms what is near it; it never chills it.² Thus the form of an effect is found in its cause; for example, where a hot cause produces a warm effect, the form of the effect is warmth; the hot cause must contain warmth which is the form of its effect in order to produce the warm effect. Even

¹C.C., I, 29, sec. 2.

²Gilson, The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, p. 181.

in the case of a transcending cause in which the form of the effect in the cause is found in a much more perfect mode than in the effect, there is still a similarity between the cause and the effect. For instance, the solar energy of the sun causes, among other effects, terrestrial heat. Although the terrestrial heat is much less hot or more deficient in the perfection of heat compared to its cause, the solar heat, the two orders of heat can be compared. And proceeding from the immediately knowable effect to the cause, we can say that the sun is hot even though not in one and the same way we can say terrestrial heat is hot. In a similar manner, God, the first cause, can be named because of the likeness to His effects in creation. He possesses all the forms of His effects and so all His effects are in some way like Him.¹

However, while there is some likeness between the first cause and its effects because the cause contains the form of its effects, God possesses these forms in a much more perfect way than His effects and so God is not altogether like His effects; that is to say, a word can not be said or a name predicated of God and His effects univocally. The reason

¹C.G., I, 29. To substantiate the point that God's effects are like Him because as their cause He possesses them, let it be remembered from a previous argument that since God's perfection means that He contains all the perfections of His effects, His effects are like Him their cause. Hence Thomas writes in C.G., I, 30, sec. 2: "Since it is possible to find in God every perfection of creatures, but in another and more eminent way, whatever names unqualifiedly designate a perfection without defect are predicated of God and of other things: for example, goodness, wisdom, being and the like."

for this is that:

An effect that does not receive a form specifically the same as that through which the agent acts can not receive according to a univocal predication the name arising from that form. Thus, the heat generated by the sun and the sun itself are not univocally hot. Now, the forms of the things God has made do not measure up to a specific likeness of the divine power; for the things that God has made receive in a divided, and particular way, that which in Him is found in a simple and universal way. 1

On the other hand, since there does remain a likeness between God and His effects, not everything that is said of Him and His creatures is merely equivocal. Since He caused them and since He possesses the form of His effects, there is some relation, some resemblance and similarity between God and His effects.²

Whereas nothing can be said of God univocally and yet not everything said of God is equivocal, something may be said of God which is less than univocal but more than equivocal. As already mentioned the way of speaking of God which strikes the mean between these two positions is the way of analogy by which one term can be predicated of an effect which is neither the same nor entirely different in meaning when it is applied to God. We turn now to an investigation of the varieties of analogy.³

¹C.G., I, 32, sec. 2.

²Ibid., I, 33.

³St. Thomas did not write a treatise on analogy and thus his treatment of analogy is diffuse though profuse. For expediency, therefore, I have had to move out of his works in order to follow secondary works dealing with his ideas of analogy. These works are by James F. Anderson, E. L. Mascall, and Gerald B. Phelan.

There are three types of analogy: the analogy of inequality, of attribution, and of proper proportionality.¹

The analogy of inequality just barely fits the description of analogy; in this type of analogy, one entity or species (e.g., man) participates in a category or a genus (e.g., animal) to a different extent than another entity of the same genus (e.g., horse). The two entities differ or are unlike in their participation in the genus; a man and a horse are two distinct beings; but they are similar and related because they are included in the same genus. Now, even though the man is a more perfect animal than the horse, and as such they are unequal, there is nevertheless the overriding factor that they both participate in the same mode of being or genus. When an attribute is predicated of these two entities in the same genus, it is always univocal. For example, the horse and the man can be called alive, but they are alive in an exactly identical way. Because of this identity in the attribute in the case of a generic predication, the analogy of inequality is not a real analogy; it is univocity.²

The analogy of attribution obtains when two or more entities which, while dissimilar and unrelated in other respects, are alike in that they are all related, even in diverse ways,

¹Gerald B. Phelan, St. Thomas and Analogy, (Milwaukee: 1943) p. 26. C.f., Thomas Aquinas, Sentences of Peter Lombard, 1 sent., dist. XIX, q. 5, a. 2, ad. 1.

²Phelan, p. 31: "Generic predication is always univocal, i.e., the ratio or character predicated is realized in each of the objects about which it is said, in a formally identical manner albeit material conditions may render it more perfectly possessed by one and less perfectly by another."

to the same and identical thing. For example, the attribute "healthy" is predicated of such things as diet, medicine, and animal, but the word is not predicated univocally because it has a different meaning when it is applied to each of them. On the other hand, the word is not really applied equivocally because they all have reference to one and the same thing which in this case is the health of the animal. This one term the health of the animal is called the prime analogate because only in the animal is the health formally and properly realized. The other things, i.e., diet and medicine are secondary analogates because they can be called "healthy" only in virtue of their relation to the health of the animal; they conserve or contribute to the health of the animal, but only the animal is actually and properly healthy. Diet and medicine are not healthy in and of themselves.¹

The key points in this analogy of attribution must be emphasized. What makes it an analogy is that while there is a diversity of relations, there is an identity of the term of these relations.² While this term is attributed to all of the related things, it is realized formally only in the prime analogate; and from this analogate the secondary analogates receive their common name by "extrinsic denomination," i.e., by virtue of their relation to the prime analogate and not by any intrinsic or inherent property of their own.³

¹James F. Anderson, The Bond of Being, (St. Louis: 1949) pp. 93.f

²Ibid., p. 96.

³Ibid., p. 98.

Because the term is properly realized only in the prime analogate and not in the secondary analogates, it is not really common to all. The term intrinsically applies only to the one thing and we in our minds apply it to other things because of their relation to the prime analogate; in other words, the attribute does not actually tell us what is intrinsic to the secondary analogates. For example, diet can be said to be healthy because it contributes to a man's health, but "healthy" is not intrinsic to diet. Something in the diet contributes to health, but we do not actually know what it is. When we use this analogy of attribution in respect to God we are similarly frustrated.. Suppose we call God good because He causes good in His creatures; in this case, God is the secondary analogate and thus He is good only virtually, i.e., by virtue of the fact that He contributes to the good of His creatures who are good formally and intrinsically. We do not actually know that God is intrinsically and formally good.¹

Finding analogy of inequality and analogy of attribution

¹E. L. Mascall, Existence and Analogy, (New York: 1949) p. 102.

defective,¹ we proceed to the analogy of proper proportionality² which St. Thomas considered the only true analogy.

The analogy of proper proportionality, in its strict and proper sense, prevails whenever the attribute or perfection analogically common to two or more beings is found intrinsically or formally in each being not, however, in the same way or mode but each in proportion to its being.³ This analogy is not univocal because the common term is proportional or analogous; different beings are related to a common term, but while each possesses the term, each possesses it in its own way, and there are a diversity of modes of possessing the term. Neither can this analogy be reduced to equivocity because each being has a real relationship to the common term because he possesses it in a proportional way. Notice that

¹The reader might find helpful the following summary of the deficiencies of these two analogical methods since the analogy of proportionality can be understood as the course steered between the two. The analogy of inequality is defective "because the perfection or character which is predicated of two or more beings, although possessed intrinsically by each of the beings in question, is possessed by all in the same manner of mode, albeit in unequal degrees." The analogy of attribution is defective "because the perfection or character which is predicated of two or more beings is possessed intrinsically by only one of the beings in question and is merely transferred by the mind to the others." Phelan, St. Thomas and Analogy, pp. 25, f.

²The analogy of improper proportionality is symbolic or metaphorical analogy. It is discarded as a metaphysical tool. See Anderson, The Bond of Being, Part 3, Chap. XIV.

³Phelan, op. cit., p. 23.

the analogy of proportionality differs from the analogy of attribution because the former provides that the perfection is intrinsic to all the beings under analogical consideration whereas the latter provides that the perfection is intrinsic to only one being, the prime analogate, and extrinsic to the others.

To elucidate this type of analogy, let us chose an example that will bring us right to the point. Of the perfections we wish to attribute to God, namely what are called the transcendentals; goodness, truth, unity, and being, take being. Every thing in some way is; everything real has being; being is intrinsic to all things. The analogy of proportionality is set up in the following way in order to express God's being: a creature's being is to the creature in the manner appropriate to the creature and this is proportional to the way God's being is to Himself in a manner appropriate to Himself. Rather than formulate this analogy in this manner:

$$\frac{\text{creature's being}}{\text{creature}} = \frac{\text{God's being}}{\text{God}}$$

it is more correct to express the analogy in this manner:

$$\text{creature's being} : \text{creature} :: \text{God's being} : \text{God}.^1$$

The latter expression is more correct because the way in which a creature's being is determined by the creature is determined by the mode of creaturehood or creatively existence

¹"Analogy" by John McIntyre in Scottish Journal of Theology, Vol. 12, No. 1, March 1959, (Edinburg: 1959), p. 9.

and this is not equal to but merely proportional to the way in which God's being is determined by Him who is different from the creature.¹ The proportion on the one side is not equal to the proportion on the other side; the proportions on each side are alike or similar; there is a likeness of proportions.² Furthermore, the common term is not numerically one or identical but is proportionately one, i.e., all the analogates share proportionately in the common term.³

In this case, as in the case of all transcendental perfections, the term "being" is not univocal because of the diversity of modes of existing or being; being is not a genus and, therefore, it is in no case predicated univocally.⁴ Being is itself proportional and not univocal because no two things exercise the same act of being, but all things are related through proportionate sharing in the act of being.⁵

This analogy of being must be one of proportionality and not attribution because attribution could be applied formally only if the prime analogate alone possessed being intrinsically and the mind merely transferred the term "being"

¹Mascall, Existence and Analogy, p. 104.

²Anderson, The Bond of Being, p. 301.

³Ibid., p. 241.

⁴Ibid., p. 237.

⁵Ibid., p. 279.

to the related analogates. But all analogates possess being because they are - they exist - and their being is intrinsic to every conceivable analogate. The fact that the common analogous term is formally realized in each analogate is the fundamental principle of the analogy of proportionality.

In the special case of the analogy between God and creature, however, the analogy of attribution does participate to a certain extent in the analogy of proportionality. God is His own being; He is uncreated; and He has created all other beings; without Him nothing would exist. In a sense, therefore, God is the prime analogate because He has intrinsic being which can not be removed and all other beings are dependant upon Him for their being. Thus, we can see that the necessary conditions for the analogy of attribution are present. However, this type of analogy may only apply virtually and not formally because all the analogates and not just God have being intrinsically, formally, and inherently.¹

One important implication of the way in which the analogy of attribution assists but is always dependent upon the analogy of proportionality is that "although we can and do know what created things are without referring them to their Creator, we can not know them as created beings, actually existing, without referring them to their Creator."² Thus we know that we are dealing with uncreated, self-subsistent being

¹Anderson, The Bond of Being, p. 238 and p. 246.

²Ibid., p. 250.

on the one hand and with created and dependent being on the other. Nevertheless, there can be no real analogy of being except on the basis of proportionality since each possesses being intrinsically although in a different way.¹

The analogy of attribution which may participate in the analogy of proportionality in the special case of the proportion between God and creature has a further significance. By itself the analogy of proportionality is adequate to enable the mind to see that God possesses an attribute in a mode proportionate to His own manner of being, and since God is the highest being and being itself, He contains the attribute in the highest proportion and even that He is that attribute itself. When this type of analogy is complemented by the analogy of attribution, however, it becomes more readily apparent that God possesses the attribute in the highest degree and even that He is that attribute itself because God, the prime analogate, possesses the attribute in itself and all the secondary analogates are dependent upon Him for their portion of the attribute which they share with Him. The analogy of attribution makes it quite apparent that God is the uncaused cause of all that is and everything that is compared with Him is a mere fragment of what He is and that therefore He is the highest good, the highest being, life, intelligence, will, unity and even goodness itself, being itself, etc.²

¹Anderson, The Bond of Being, p. 250.

²C.f., C.G., I, 35 - 102.

In itself, the analogy of proportionality discourages the possible suggestion that attributes can be predicated because of ontological continuity among the analogates; rather it affirms that there is a relationship among them in spite of the diversity of the different ways in which they possess the attribute. The alliance between the analogies of proportionality and attribution, no matter how tenuous, tends to challenge further the suggestion of ontological continuity because it clearly points out the distinction between the self-subsistent Creator and the dependent creature.¹

At this point, having emphasized the diversity in being, the objection might well be raised that there are two unknowns in the analogy of proportion, that of God and the attribute. For example in the analogy:

created good : dependent being :: God's uncreated good :
God's self-subsistent being,

the objection would be that the entire right side of the proportion is unknown.

The objection is answered by saying first of all that "being" as predicated of dependent and self-subsistent being is not equivocal and unrelated; "being" actually designates something that is common to both of these modes of being although it is proportionately common since these modes of

¹McIntyre, Analogy, p. 12; c.f., Anderson, The Bond of Being, p. 309.

being are diverse - even infinitely diverse. Therefore, there is only one unknown term, i.e., God's attribute, because the middle term "being" is analogically the same.¹

What then is the character of the knowledge of God obtained by analogy? By the analogy of proportionality it may be known that God has a host of attributes, such as goodness, being, intelligence, unity. Furthermore, we know that He has these attributes according to the mode of His being. But our knowledge is sorely limited because we are not able to conceive of what these attributes of His are in themselves; we can only affirm that they are commensurate with His nature. We know, for example, that God's goodness is proportionate to His being, but we do not know what that goodness is in itself apart from the proportion.² While this knowledge is certain and proper, it is certainly incomplete because the attributes are always relational and are always tied to that creatureliness to which they are proportionate.

¹Anderson, The Bond of Being, p. 289.

²Ibid., p. 321. Anderson's summary of the character of analogical knowledge found on page 322 reads as follows: "All analogical knowledge is imperfect because analogical concepts do not abstract perfectly from their inferiors and therefore they have not, like univocal concepts, a simple unity, but only a proportional one. All analogical knowledge is incomprehensive, inexhaustive, non-definitive. (Only generic or specific objects can be defined.) Analogical knowledge is in the highest degree general, that is to say, common, and for this reason it is indistinct, as compared with the clean-cut, quidditative knowledge acquired through univocal ideas. But despite its radical deficiencies as knowledge, analogical knowledge is the highest and best knowledge of which we are naturally capable."

To predicate these positive attributes of God, i.e., goodness, intelligence, etc., is the supreme accomplishment of the natural human mind. It can go no further. Here the mind has reached the limit in the purity with which it is able to abstract. This upper limit leaves us with imperfect knowledge of God. Natural theology leads the unaided human reason to the point where it can affirm with certainty that God is His essence, that He is being itself, goodness itself and so on, but just as the human mind can not conceive of God's essence in this life so it can never conceive of God's being itself, goodness itself, etc. It is perhaps interesting that not only can the natural mind know truths about God up to a certain point, but also it can know that point and is sure that it can not pass beyond that limit.¹

What puts the upper limit on the knowledge which natural man can know is his own finite structure. We have seen how the intellect functions: it begins with sensible existents and abstracts, but even in highest type of abstraction which is the analogy of proportionality, the intellect can never completely detach itself from the finite and creaturely, and thus, it can never pierce into the essence of God to know Him completely as He knows Himself.

But is there another cause of the limitation of the intelligence - sin, for instance? The question is not whether sin makes the natural knowledge of God impossible be-

¹Burt, Types of Religious Philosophy, p. 117.

cause the natural man is in sin and we have just discussed how Thomas shows that certain knowledge of God is possible for him. The question is rather, how is his natural knowledge affected by sin aside from the finite limitations? To be able to answer this from Thomas' position we must see the effects of the fall upon man's reason.

First of all, of course, the fall involved man's falling from grace and faith whereby he lost the knowledge of the supernatural truths of God, but this is not to say that by the fall man lost the ability to see the essence of God because even in his original state of righteousness man could not see His essence.¹ But before the fall man "knew God with a more perfect knowledge than we do now,"² The fall "obscured,"³ "disturbed,"⁴ or "overturned"⁵ the order of reason.⁶ Thomas explains why fallen man can not know God as clearly as he once could:

¹Thomas, Summa Theologiae, I, 94, art. 1.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., I - II, 85, art. 3.

⁴Ibid., I - II, 87, sec. 1.

⁵Ibid.

⁶C.G., IV, 52, sec. 1: "Greatest, of course, among the spiritual penalties [of the Fall] is the frailty of reason: from this it happens that man with difficulty arrives at knowledge of the truth; and that with ease he falls into error; and that he can not entirely overcome his beastly appetites but is over and over again beclouded by them."

God is seen in a much more perfect manner through His intelligible effects than through those which are only sensible or corporeal. But in his present state, man is impeded as regards the full and clear consideration of intelligible creatures, because he is distracted by and occupied with sensible things. Now it is written (Eccles. vii. 30): "God made man right." And man was made right by God in this sense, that in him the lower powers were subjected to the higher and the higher nature was made so as not to be impeded by the lower. Wherefore the first man was not impeded by exterior things from a clear and steady contemplation of the intelligible effects which he perceived by the radiation of the first truth, whether by a natural or by a gratuitous knowledge. 1

Elsewhere he says:

As a result of original justice, the reason had perfect hold over the lower parts of the soul, while reason itself was perfected by God and was subject to Him. Now this same original justice was forfeited through the sin of our first parent ... so that all the powers of the soul are left, as it were, destitute of their proper order, whereby they are naturally directed to virtue; which destitution is called a wounding of nature ... Therefore, in so far as the reason is deprived of its order to the true, there is the wound of ignorance... 2

According to St. Thomas, therefore, sin has little affect upon the potentialities of man's reason. Man apart from faith is still capable of knowing God in the same way in which he was able to know God before the fall by means of unaided reason. The fall affected man's reason only in the operations of his reason and not in its potentiality. The fall made his reasoning process disorderly, and the dis-

¹Thomas, Summa Theologica, I, 94, art. 1.

²Ibid., I-II, 85, art. 1.

order or disorganization of his reason allowed confusion and error to enter his reason where it would not have entered before the fall. The fall by no matter of means obliterated or demolished the potential capabilities or powers of man's reason; theoretically, all men could achieve the natural knowledge of God which we have described.¹

The fact is, however, that sin did impede the reasoning process or the actual working out of reason, and that is why not all men can achieve this natural knowledge of God. With a great deal of hard work, study, concentration and help from others who know, this knowledge is possible, but of course not all men have the time or patience or perspicacity. Because God knew that all men could not achieve this knowledge and because He is merciful and good and wants all to be saved, He graciously made available by revelation the truths that are potentially obtainable by natural reason. That is why the simple and heavily encumbered believe some of the same things (e.g., that God exists) that metaphysicians know by reason.²

Revelation plays a much more important role than merely making natural theology available to those who could not attain it by themselves. Revelation makes available truths about God which surpass the capabilities of man's natural reason (e.g., the Trinity, Incarnation, resurrection, eternal

¹Thomas, Summa Theologica, I-II, 85, art. 2.

²C.G., I, 4.

life). Revealed truths are given by God; they come down from God to man as distinct from the upward movement of natural theology which moves from creature to Creator. These truths can be grasped by man only in faith, and faith is a gift of God's grace.

These truths revealed to man's faith are necessary for man's salvation. The truths of natural theology would not be saving truths. These natural truths of God are necessary to man because they tell him that his true good lies in God¹ so that he will pursue God further, but in themselves there is no salvation. The content of the truths about God which supplement and supersede the natural knowledge of God provides salvation. "It was necessary for man's salvation," Thomas says, "that there should be a knowledge revealed by God, besides philosophical science² built up by human reason."³ Elsewhere he says:

The perfection of the rational creatures consists not only in what belongs to it in respect of its nature, but also in that which it acquires through a supernatural participation of Divine goodness. Hence it was said above⁴ that man's ultimate happiness consists in a supernatural vision of God: to which vision man cannot attain unless he be taught by God...

Hence in order that a man arrive at the perfect vision of heavenly happiness, he must first of all believe God, as a disciple believes the master who is teaching him.

5

¹Burt, Types of Religious Philosophy, p. 124.

²I.e., natural theology.

³Thomas, Summa Theologica, I, 1, art. 1.

⁴Ibid., I-II, 3, art. 8.

⁵Ibid., I-II, 2, art. 3.

Thomas' position on salvation through revelation alone finds concurrence in the Vatican Council's statement that the "supernatural virtue" faith "is the beginning of man's salvation."¹

While the truths of revelation surpass the truths ascertainable in natural theology, while the truths of revelation are graciously handed down from God to man as opposed to man's reaching up to God in natural theology, and while the truths of revelation alone provide salvation, they do not contradict the truths of natural theology. Natural and revealed theology are perfectly compatible and harmonious. Both types of theology are concerned with knowledge of the same God.²

In summary, let it be noted that what St. Thomas has done in his theology is to synthesize two ways of knowing God. He affirms that both natural theology and revealed theology are certain and sure ways of knowing and speaking about God and that the two ways are harmonious. Natural theology leads up to revealed theology which teaches truths of God which are saving truths and which supercede the capabilities of the unaided human reason. In most cases, the same truths which could be known by the natural reason have been revealed because of the weakness of the human intellect, and thus, there is an overlapping of the two ways because

¹Vatican Council: Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, Chapter III.

²C.G., I, 7.

while these truths belong potentially to the sphere of natural theology, they actually are part of the revealed theology. As we shall see in the next chapter, Thomas' optimistic assertion of the certainty of what can be known by natural theology and his syntehsis of natural theology with revealed theology are challenged by Karl Barth.

KARL BARTH'S CRITICISM OF ROMAN CATHOLIC NATURAL THEOLOGY

This chapter presents Karl Barth's attack on Roman Catholic natural theology. It is hoped that in the course of discussing his criticism, a picture of his own ideas concerning man's knowledge of God will emerge. His criticism is significant because perhaps never before in the history of Christian theology has the case against natural theology and the case for revelation alone been so forcefully stated.

Barth's rejection of natural theology is categorical and passionate. When he was invited to speak at the Gifford Lectures which are specifically intended to promote natural theology, he warned the men who had invited him that he was "an avowed opponent of all natural theology."¹ When the invitation was upheld in spite of his warning, he gave his lectures on revealed theology saying that this would indirectly aid natural theology because the only way natural theology could exist is to be the antithesis of or protest against revealed theology; it exists as a parasite of revealed theology.² He finds absolutely no room in theology for natural theology; there can be no compromise with it; it must be totally rejected. "If you really reject natural theology," he says, "you do not stare at the serpent, with the result that it

¹Karl Barth, The Knowledge of God and the Service of God According to the Teaching of the Reformation, translated by J. L. M. Haire and Ian Henderson, (New York: 1939) p. 6.

²Ibid., pp. 6 f.

stares back at you, hypnotises you, and is ultimately certain to bite you, but you hit it and kill it as soon as you see it!"¹

The principle reason he thinks there can be no natural knowledge of God is that he views the damage of the fall much more pessimistically than Thomas. While Thomas believes that although the fall made natural knowledge difficult to attain it did not preclude it, Barth asserts that the sin of man makes natural knowledge of God completely impossible. He says that by the fall man lost his capacity for God because he became disobedient to Him, and "to the roots of his being he lives in this disobedience."² It is not merely that man lacks something which he ought to be or to have or to be capable of in relation to God. He lacks everything. It is not merely that he is in a dangerous and damaged state, but in his being toward God he is completely finished and impotent. He is not only a sick man but a dead one."³

Not only is man cut off from God because of his sinfulness but also he is separated from God because God is wholly different from the creatures which man can know. God is the Holy, Inscrutable, and Transcendent One Who is hidden and

¹Smith, Natural Theology, "No!", Karl Barth, (London: 1946) p. 76.

²Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, (Edinburgh: 1936 et seq. Hereafter referred to as C.D., cited by volume, part, and page) I/2, p. 188.

³Ibid., p. 257.

veiled from man. Barth says:

It is the Deus revelatus who is the Deus Absconditus, the God to whom there is no way and no bridge, of whom we could not say or have to say one single word, had He not of His own initiative met us as Deus revelatus. 1

Man's sin on the one side and God's transcendence on the other make the gulf separating man and God wide and deep. The gulf is so vast that it can only be bridged from God's side. The bridge which brings about man's knowledge of God is God's reconciling grace in Jesus Christ.

In fact, if it were not for the bridge, man would not have known about the gulf.² Only as he sees that Christ came to save the world does man know that it was lost.³ The very fact of God's redeeming and reconciling encroachment upon man in Jesus Christ shows that man by himself had no way of knowing and loving God and that God had to come to man if man were to know Him. God's gift of grace contains the judgment that man is helpless without it.⁴

¹C.D., I/1, p. 368.

²C.D., I/2, p. 280: "Revelation itself is needed for knowing that God is hidden and man blind. Revelation and it alone really and finally separates God and man by bringing them together. For by bringing them together it informs man about God and about himself. It reveals God as the Lord of eternity, as the Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer and characterises man as a creature, as a sinner, as one devoted to death. It does that by telling him that God is free for us, that God has created and sustains him, that He forgives his sin, and that He saves him from death."

³Ibid., p. 257.

⁴Karl Barth, untitled article in Revelation, edited by John Baillie and Hugh Martin, (New York: 1937. Hereafter cited as Revelation) pp. 49 f.

Only as God extends the bridge of grace to man can man know God. The coming of Jesus Christ is the bridge which restores the communion and fellowship which had been broken by the fall. In this restored community, in this new covenant, man can know God. But only in this covenant can he know God because only in this covenant is there reconciliation, the wiping away of the effects of the fall. This coming of God to man in Jesus Christ is revelation, and only in this revelation is there reconciliation and only in this reconciliation is there revelation.¹ Thus, while Thomas could say that there was knowledge of God which is not saving, Barth maintains that there can be no knowledge of God without salvation.

God not only starts the bridge from His side of the gulf and extends it across to the other side, He also completes the bridge by fastening it to man's side. God initiates the revelation in His action; He comes to man in Jesus Christ; and He also gives man the ability to receive His revelation. Lacking the suitability or capacity for revelation, man needs the help of the Holy Spirit to awaken him to God's revelation. In contradistinction from natural theology, God is entirely responsible for man's knowledge of God; man in no way, can induce it or grasp it by himself. "Not only the objective, but also the subjective element in revelation, not only its actuality but also its potentiality, is the being and action of the self-revealing God alone."²

¹C.D., I/1, p. 161.

²C.D., I/2, p. 29.

From what has already been said, Barth's opinion on natural theology as being a prelude to revealed theology may have been anticipated. He is in total disagreement with Thomas on this point. He maintains that there is not a two layer knowledge of God; there is only one layer and that is revealed knowledge. The following discussion concerns Barth's rejection of the way of natural theology and his advocacy of the way of revealed theology alone. His criticism stands out in relief when it is contrasted point by point with the reasons Thomas gives in favor of natural theology as a prelude to revealed theology.

That Scriptural sanction for natural theology can be found in Romans 1:19, f., as it was by St. Thomas, is a very important consideration for Barth who takes the Bible with profound seriousness. However, he exegetes the passage so that its meaning is favorable to his views. Thus, in the same passage that Thomas finds support for natural theology, Barth finds material to sustain his attack against natural theology.¹

Barth affirms, first of all, that the passage can refer to a natural knowledge of God only when it is taken out of the context of the letter and considered by itself. Paul's theme in Romans is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and says Barth, he does not change his theme in this passage, or in the larger one (1:18-3:20) in which it is imbedded. Paul does not abandon "his office as a messenger of the Gospel for a while in order

¹For Barth's exposition of this passage see C.D., I/2, pp. 306 f.; C.D., II/1, pp. 119, f.; A Shorter Commentary on Romans, (Richmond: 1959) pp. 24 - 30.

to speak in the first place in an entirely different capacity as a religious interpreter of the human situation as such, as a Christian philosopher of religion and history."¹

According to him, Paul is not speaking of the Gentiles as such or of their knowledge of God in general, but of the Gentiles and their knowledge as seen in the light of God's revelation in Christ. Paul "is speaking of the Gentiles as they are now confronted with the Gospel, whether they know it or not, and whether they like it or not. They are confronted with the Gospel because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and because since then the proclamation of His Name has been taking its course throughout the world."²

The Gospel reveals that the heathen have sinned against the truth of God which they knew from creation since the beginning.

God was revealed to them from the very first.
The world which always surrounded them was always His creation and spoke of His great works and therefore of Himself.

3

The heathen have had a fragmentary knowledge of God. "God as the Creator of all things has always been, objectively speaking, the proper and real object of their knowledge, exactly in the same sense as undoubtedly the Jews in their Law were objectively dealing with God's revelation."⁴ But

¹Barth, A Shorter Commentary on Romans, p. 24.

²Ibid., pp. 27 f.

³C.D., II/1, p. 120.

⁴Barth, A Shorter Commentary on Romans, p. 28.

this knowledge is not immediately apparent and only shows itself in the Cross of Jesus Christ because only in the light of Golgatha does the heathen's opposition to God become apparent and only here does God's judgment on their opposition become evident;¹ and only in this opposition and in this judgment is the heathen's knowledge of God known. The Cross showed that the heathen knew God well enough to oppose Him, that they erred "against their own better knowledge"² and thus disobeyed Him. To put it one way, their very opposition and disobedience showed that they "were directed toward God;"³ and to put it another way, the heathen can be said to have known God only to the extent that they did not remain in that knowledge.⁴ God's wrath manifested in the Cross reveals that He held the Gentiles accountable for their knowledge of Him, and He accuses them of being without excuse because they knew Him from creation.

From this same Golgatha where it is revealed that the Jews have never kept their own Law, it becomes clear that the heathen also have always sinned no less responsibly against God. They have sinned against the truth which they knew so well... For this reason they, too, are guilty.

5

¹Barth, A Shorter Commentary on Romans, p. 28.

²Ibid.

³C.D., II/1, p. 121.

⁴C.D., I/2, p. 307.

⁵C.D., II/1, p. 120.

Barth says that in this passage Paul is confronting the Gentiles with the Gospel and with the truth that they did not know before, namely, that although they did not know it, they actually knew God and that what they thought was God was not really God at all. They knew God objectively from His works in creation, but "they have not rendered Him the honor and gratitude they owe Him."¹ Failing to do this, they have hopelessly perverted their knowledge of God. "They have been ousted by another mind and thought and activity which at its root (in negation of the fact that God is revealed to man from the creation) does not have God as its object."² They confused the Creator for the creature and their religion became idolatry. Barth concludes, "now that revelation has come and its light has fallen on heathendom, heathen religion is shown to be the very opposite of revelation: a false religion of unbelief."³ Their religion:

...consists in one great confusion between the Creator and His creatures. If there is any position from which no bridge can possibly be built to the Gospel, to the knowledge of the living God, then this is it! Human religion, as radically distinguished from belief in God's revelation, always originates and consists in this confusion: in the mistaken confidence in which man wants to decide for himself who and what God is, which can only produce this confusion, i.e., idolatry.

4

What Barth is saying in his exegesis of this passage

¹Barth, A Shorter Commentary on Romans, p. 29.

²C.D., I/2, p. 307.

³Ibid.

⁴Barth, A Shorter Commentary on Romans, p. 29.

is that only by the light of the Gospel does anyone know that the heathen actually do have some knowledge of God because their knowledge is so perverted that its relation to the true knowledge is not apparent. And he is also saying that only by the light of the Gospel does it become manifest that there can never be true knowledge of God from a knowledge of creation alone since the heathen will always be in opposition to God and will never give Him the praise for His works. At the very least, Barth is saying that Romans 1:19, f., does not allow a basis for natural theology; above all else he wants to make this clear. "It is impossible to draw from the text," he says, "a statement (which can then be advanced as timeless, general and abstract truth) concerning a natural union with God or knowledge of God on the part of man in himself and as such."¹

On the basis of Romans 1:19, f., therefore, Barth, as opposed to St. Thomas, would say that natural theology yields a false religion and should definitely not be employed as a prelude to revealed theology.

The second reason given in the first chapter why Thomas employed natural theology as a prelude to revealed theology was that it was consistent with another principle of which he was convinced, namely, that grace does not destroy nature but perfects it. Barth acknowledges the relationship of grace and nature, but he uses it to oppose natural theology.

We have seen that Thomas sees the relationship of nature

¹C.D., II/1, p. 121.

and grace as a both-and proposition. Barth, on the other hand, sees it as an either-or relation. Where Thomas holds nature and grace together in synthesis, Barth holds them together in antithesis. For Thomas grace straightens out the disorder of nature, but for Barth grace gives an altogether new order to nature. The former sees grace as eliciting or drawing out the potential perfection of nature; the latter sees grace as adding a quality which is altogether absent. While both agree that grace restores nature to an original godlikeness, Thomas sees the restoration happening in the flow of renewal while for Barth it happens in the pangs of a re-creation. Barth objects to the harmony in which Thomas holds nature and grace; he asserts that they are held together in tension.¹

Barth criticizes Roman Catholic ethics on the basis of this harmony in which they hold nature and grace. The following quotation will give the flavor of his criticism and of the way he views the relationship of nature and grace:

 1C.D., II/1, p. 74: "Grace is the majesty, the freedom, the undeservedness, the unexpectedness, the newness, the arbitrariness, in which the relationship to God and therefore the possibility of knowing Him is opened up to man by God Himself. Grace is really the orientation in which God sets up an order which did not previously exist, to the power and benefit of which man has no claim, which he has no power to set up, which he has no competence even subsequently to justify, which in its singularity - which corresponds exactly to the singularity of the nature and being of God - he can only recognize and acknowledge as it is actually set up, as it is powerful and effective as a benefit that comes to him."

[For Roman Catholic ethics] the same ordination of man to God, of nature to supernature, which is not conferred and constituted in spite of the fall, but maintained and continued in spite of the fall, and which is natural as deriving from creation, is the connecting point by which the moral theology which is ostensibly based on grace alone, and derives from Scripture and dogma, has actually to be oriented. Whatever its superiority may be to moral philosophy, it cannot exist except as super-structure upon that sub-structure. If it is this which legitimates the latter, it is the latter which carries it. And whatever it will have to say of special theological virtues and duties, it will not say it in respect of a subject newly created by the grace of God, but in respect of the subject who is fully capable of knowing and doing the good, and therefore even without the grace of God the subject of the Christian behaviour which is under consideration. 1

Barth goes on to criticize the underlying principle by which nature and grace are held in harmony. This principle is that nature and grace can be discussed on the basis of a metaphysics of being in which they are mutually related by means of analogy.² His criticism is that this principle diverts our attention from the true principle by which nature and grace are related, namely the revelation of Jesus Christ in which it is seen that God is Lord of creation and of the Church. He says that the theory of the analogy of being by which the Roman Catholics discuss nature and grace must be "condemned as a perilous distraction" because "grace which has from the start to share its power with a force of nature is no longer grace, i.e., it can not be recognized as what the

¹C.D., II/2, p. 530.

²While his criticism of the Roman Catholic theory of the analogy of being is discussed at length below, it is expedient to anticipate the discussion in order to see how it is correlated with his views on nature and grace.

grace of God is in the consideration and conception of that divine act, as what it is in Jesus Christ."¹ God's grace, he says, "does not find an existing partner in man, but creates a partner."² God's grace makes possible the co-ordination of man with God just as God is responsible for creating a God-knowing subject; man by himself is not able to co-operate with His grace just as he can not know God by himself."³

And therefore, when from the very outset man is co-ordinated with God on the basis of this analogy - not in the humanity of Jesus Christ and therefore on the basis of God's own free decree, but simple in his metaphysical being as a rational creature - God is no longer God. 4

Barth, therefore, rejects the idea that the relation of nature and grace is consistent with the use of natural theology as a prelude to revealed theology. On the contrary, he finds the relationship of nature and grace consistent with his thesis that there is no natural theology but only a revealed theology. Just as he denies the continuity between nature and grace so he denies the continuity between natural and revealed theology. Nature and grace are not related bilaterally but unilaterally with grace as the cardinal constituent. He urges us to focus on grace and revelation if we would understand nature and the way man can know God.

The third reason Thomas was disposed to employ natural theology was that he needed to give greater status to the

¹C.D., II/2, p. 531.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 532.

⁴Ibid., p. 531.

authority of reason, for among other purposes, the apologetic purpose. Here again Barth opposed natural theology for the very reason Thomas advocates it.

Barth is opposed to the idea that there can be any common ground - be it reason or any other thing such as experience or the religious possibilities of man - on which Christian and non-Christians can discuss God.

The Church can not ask even for the benefit of pagans whether God exists or is real; it can not ask whether God is known or is knowable. The Church already knows that God exists and is real, that He is known and knowable because its very being rests on God's existence and the fact that He has made Himself known. The Church is established by and receives its reality from the word of God. The discussion of God presupposes that God has made Himself known and continues to make Himself known. Questions about God "can not then be posed in abstracto but only in concreto; not a priori but only a posteriori!"¹ The only legitimate questions are, "How far is God known?" and "How far is God knowable?"²

Even in behalf of pagans, the Church can not employ any criterion outside of the knowledge of God itself to measure, judge or confirm the truth of what it confesses and proclaims about God. The only criterion by which its message can be judged is the very essence of the Church itself which is "Jesus Christ, God in His gracious approach to man in revelation

¹C.D., II/1, p. 5.

²Ibid.

and reconciliation."¹ To seek any criterion outside of this one:

...presupposes the existence of a theory of knowledge as a hinterland where consideration of the truth, worth and competence of the Word of God, on which the knowledge of God is grounded, can for a time at least be suspended. But this is the very thing which, for the point of view of its possibility, must not happen. Just as the reality of the Word of God in Jesus Christ bears its possibility within itself, as does the reality of the Holy Spirit, by whom the Word of God comes to man, so too the possibility of the knowledge of God and therefore the know-ability of God can not be questioned in vacuo, or by means of a general criterion of knowledge delimiting the knowledge of God from without but only from within this real knowledge itself. 2

It is therefore impossible to judge the Christian knowledge of God by a criterion which is supposedly neutral and detached. If the pagan or unbeliever would test the truth of Christianity, he must bring himself into the sphere of the Church - if only hypothetically - and test the Christian knowledge by its own criterion, the revelation in Christ.³

Besides the impossibility of detachment, there is another reason why there can not be common ground between the unbeliever and the believer. The reason is that there is no criterion which can test general knowledge and knowledge of God at the same time. The knowledge of God which is given in Jesus Christ (and there only is it given) is unique and utterly new. Revelation means to be presented with something new, something which was not and could not be known before or in any other way.

¹C.D., I/1, p. 3.

²C.D., II/1, p. 5.

³Barth, Revelation, p. 41.

The revelation of God is not one of a series in a pattern by which God can be known; no analogies can be drawn from human experience or reason in order to expect or judge this revelation.¹ The most important reason why God can not be considered and conceived as one of a series of objects perceivable by human beings is the obvious reason that God Himself is the object and He is unique and distinct from all other objects. Nothing else that man can know meets him in the same way that God meets him and thus this meeting is unique. Because of this uniqueness, there is no basis and no data on which to set up a criterion by which to judge the Christian knowledge of God.²

Barth's point boils down to this: knowledge of God "will be discerned in Jesus Christ or it will just not be discerned at all."³ The knowledge of God which he is talking about does not derive from reason but from faith. To know God is to have faith; without faith God is not known.⁴ Therefore, besides faith, there is no other authority or norm by which to judge the knowledge of God because God is not even known except by faith.

But how then would Barth have the Church talk about God with heathens who have no faith? What he would not have Christians do is suspend their faith and assume a mask of

¹Revelation, pp. 48 f.

²C.D., II/1, pp. 14 f.

³Revelation, p. 49.

⁴C.D., II/1, pp. 12 f.

unbelief in order to talk with the heathen on their own grounds. He condemns any natural theology which tries to prepare unbelievers for revelation by surreptitiously guiding them by faith to make certain decisions about their gods which will lead them to knowledge of the real God; thus he would condemn Aquinas for trying to lead the pagans to the knowledge of God by way of pagan arguments to a pagan conception of an unmoved mover. It is wrong for the Christian apologist to mask his faith for several reasons. First, it is wrong because the unbeliever might see that the believer is trying to trick him; he will be offended because the believer did not take his unbelief seriously. It is also wrong because the unbeliever might see that the believer does not take his faith seriously if he is willing to hide it. But most important of all, to talk with unbelievers on their own ground will result in one of two things. On the one hand, the Christian natural apologist's argument might be so convincing that the unbeliever will be swayed. In this case, the unbeliever will identify with the real God the god offered by natural theology as the best possibility within the sphere of the unbeliever, and this will only entrench him further in unbelief because the god he has come to know is not the real God at all because the apologist has not yet addressed him from faith to tell him about the real God; faith has only been used as a guide in the construction of natural theology's arguments; it has never differentiated itself from the sphere of human possibility.¹ On the other

¹C.D., II/1, p. 93.

hand, the unbeliever might beat the believer on his own grounds. The believer who masks his faith might fail to convince the unbeliever on the terms of natural theology. In this case, the unbeliever will think that his position is right and the position of faith is wrong; he will become more entrenched in unbelief thinking that he has conquered faith while he has really only conquered another form of human possibility and another aspect of unbelief.¹

The Christian apologetic, Barth believes, must be conducted so that the unbeliever will, first of all, feel that he is being taken seriously enough to be allowed the courtesy of knowing with whom he is conversing. He must be confronted with faith, clearly and unambiguously. When faith takes itself seriously, it can not abandon its position even temporarily. When faith is not disguised, "the situation is then ripe for serious and clear-cut discussion."² Faith will not concern itself with the possibilities of unbelief; it will not try to cultivate any potentials in unbelief in order to prepare it for the real knowledge of God. Faith will occupy itself merely with knowledge within its own possibilities. "It will merely enter the conversation in the simple form of a witness."³ As the believer witnesses to his faith he prays that the Holy Spirit will also witness to this faith and awaken the unbeliever to faith in God. The success of the conversion is determined

¹C.D., II/1, pp. 93 f.

²Ibid., p. 96.

³Ibid.

by God rather than the apologist.

Barth, then, thinks that apologetics is used in the wrong way when it is used as an argument to employ natural theology as a prelude to revealed theology. The Christian apologist can not pretend to appeal to an authority which is common to the Christian and non-Christian; there is no neutral criterion, and there is no criterion which embraces both man's general knowledge and his special knowledge of God. Furthermore, the Christian apologist can not forsake his faith and try to deal with unbelievers on the latter's terms because his unbelief will only be hardened. The only legitimate apologetic tactic is for faith to witness to the God who can be known only because He has revealed Himself.

We have seen that the fourth reason why Thomas employed natural theology as a prelude to revealed theology was his epistemology. He was confident that the way man can know enables him to know God from creation by natural ability and that this knowledge will lead him up to the vestibule of the revealed knowledge of God. Karl Barth's epistemology, on the other hand, allows him to assert that there can be no natural knowledge of God, that even if there were a natural knowledge, it could not lead to revealed knowledge, and that there is only knowledge of God by way of revelation.

For the purposes of analyzing Barth's criticism, we may combine two parts of Thomas' epistemology which we previously treated separately: that knowledge begins with the senses and that we know God from his effects which are perceivable by the senses. It should be remembered that both of these theories

presuppose that God is known indirectly and not directly.

In one sense, Barth agrees with Thomas: he does say that knowledge of God does begin with the senses and that God is known from His effects. He also affirms with Thomas that God is known indirectly and not directly.

Barth says that God makes Himself known sacramentally. God gives Himself to us in a sign which is readily perceivable by the senses. When God comes to man, He takes upon Himself a form and "makes Himself the object of human contemplation, human experience, human thought, human speech."¹ When God came to man in Jesus Christ, He made Himself accessible to everyone's knowledge because He was in a creaturely form which could be understood by His fellow men.² God, therefore, makes Himself objective to men in a visible form which could be called an effect of His. Thus, with Thomas, Barth believes that God's sensually perceivable effects are a factor in our knowledge of God.

¹C.D., I/1, p. 362.

²C.D., IV/2, p. 38: Jesus Christ "existed in time like all other men as a creature among creatures. He was a human figure in the history of Israel and world history, a concrete element in the context of all cosmic occurrence. And this means that He is also generally visible to His fellow-creatures, and may be generally located and interpreted, within the limits that this is possible to creatures. Within those limits He is not inaccessible, but accessible, to their seeing and locating and interpreting. No special eyes are needed to be aware of Him, nor is any special understanding needed to interpret Him, within the limits in which man can interpret what he sees."

Furthermore, Barth agrees that man's knowledge of God is indirect and not direct. He says that only God's knowledge of Himself is direct and immediate. When God makes Himself objectively present to men, however, He clothes or veils Himself in a form or sign. God's objectivity to man in a form is distinguished from His objectivity to Himself "not by a lesser degree of truth, but by its particular form suitable to us, the creature." God is "mediately objective to us in His revelation, in which He meets us under the sign and veil of other objects."¹

On the other hand, Barth differs radically with Thomas about the significance of these sensually perceivable effects in the knowledge of God. He differs with him precisely because he is talking about these effects in the context of revelation.

These forms in which God reveals Himself are not significant in their own right; it is only God's use of them for the purposes of revelation which makes them significant. "The form as such...does not take the place of God. It is not the form that reveals, speaks, comforts, works, helps, but God in the form."² There is no revelatory quality in these forms themselves which would enable anyone to build up a valid theology. The possibility and the reality of the knowledge of God is to be found only in God and not in the world. Even the form of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, namely the man Jesus of Nazareth, is not significant in terms of yielding knowledge of God; it was only the divine action in this form which made

¹C.D., II/1, p. 16.

²C.D., I/1, p. 369.

knowledge possible.¹ In fact, at one point, Barth goes so far as to say that the form is misleading, that it not only does not contribute but also hinders man's knowledge of God; the form veils God not only because of its worldliness and creatureliness but also because of the fallen nature of the worldliness and creatureliness.²

The reason the form is not significant in itself is that God does not pass over into it. He does not exhaust Himself in His sign. God does not become trapped within the form, so to speak, in order for man to be able to say "there is God in that thing."³ "The result therefore of God assuming a form is not a medium or a third thing between God and man, nor a reality different from God, which as such would be the subject of revelation."⁴ God is not tied to the form; He is free from the form. He is "free to reveal Himself or not to reveal Himself."⁵

¹C.D., I/1, p. 371; C.D., II/1, p. 56: "It is not as if the objectivity of God is, so to speak, naturally inherent in the objectivity of the creature instituted as a sacrament and used as such. It is not even present in the man Jesus merely by reason of the fact that this man exists, so that we can assure ourselves of it by assuring ourselves of the existence of this man... Even the man Jesus as such is always enigma as well. If He is not only enigma, if as enigma He is also illumination, disclosure and communication, then it is thanks to His unity with the Son of God and of the faith in Him effected by the Holy Spirit."

²C.D., I/1, p. 189.

³Ibid., p. 44.

⁴Ibid., p. 369.

⁵Ibid.

Knowledge of God does not depend on the significance of the form or on the special understanding of man but solely on the grace of God. He gives Himself in the form, and by His actions in the form He gives them a special significance, and finally He awakens the minds of men so that they can recognize the form for what it is, namely the sign of His revelation. While it is true that God is veiled to the physical eye of man because He is not identical with the form He has assumed and that He is also veiled to the 'spiritual' eye of man because of man's sin, resistance and disobedience,¹ it is nevertheless true that in spite of this incapacity of man, God in His mode of the Holy Spirit can enlighten the mind and heart of man so that he can see what God is in the form and can come into fellowship with Him Who is revealed.² The Holy Spirit:

is the finger of God which opens blind eyes and deaf ears for the truth, which quickens dead hearts by and for the truth, which causes the reason of man, so concerned about its limitations and so proud within those limitations. He creates the Christian community and in and with their faith and love and hope the knowledge of Jesus Christ... Wherever there is Christian gnosis it is His work. That is why it has no other sources or norms. That is why it can be had without any demonstration of its origin. That is why it is not a human product or possession.

3

Thus, while Barth agrees with Thomas that God is known indirectly and that He is known partly by means of the senses through His effects or forms which He uses, he differs radically from Thomas by saying that these epistemological principles

¹C.D., II/1, p. 190.

²C.D., IV/2, p. 126. A "twofold disclosure takes place, the opening up of the fact and the opening up of the human subject to receive it."

³C.D., IV/2, p. 126.

are not part of a natural knowledge of God. He uses these same principles, but only as they are employed in sacramental or revealed theology. The following is perhaps a good summary of how Barth differs with Thomas concerning the idea of knowing God from His effects:

We understand His work and sign very badly if we want to understand it as an object like other objects, and therefore to use it as a sort of Atlas of revelation from which we can read the being of God without God Himself speaking to us through it all in His act as the living Lord, according to His free grace. We understand His work and sign very badly if we think that with their help we can survey and master God from some sort of humanly logical, ethical, or religious precedence. 1

The other epistemological principle which both Barth and Aquinas held in common but each use differently in support of their own theories of the knowledge of God is the axiom that there is a correspondence or similarity between the knower and the known object. Thomas used this principle in support of his natural theology, as we have seen, because it allowed him to say that man could know spiritual and universal truths and ultimately God by abstraction from particular and material things because man being a mixture of the corporeal and spiritual was like the truth he knew: universal, but tied to the particular. Barth does not deny the principle; indeed he affirms it, saying "It is the case that we resemble what we can apprehend."² He does, however, reject its use in natural theology and claims it exclusively for revealed theology.

¹C.D., II/1, p. 23.

²Ibid., p. 166.

He says that it is just because of this principle that man can not naturally know God. Natural man is fallen man and as such he in no way resembles the Holy God. "Man's capacity for God...has really been lost."¹

Only the reconciliation which God accomplished in Christ makes the resemblance between God and man possible. Christ restores the relationship between man and God, and thus He restores man's lost capacity for God. Faith is man's acknowledgement of God's reconciliation in Christ, and it is in faith that man is "actually made fit"² to know God. It is faith that provides the similarity between the knower and the known, and it is in faith that knowing occurs. Faith is man's decision to obey God, and this corresponds to God's gracious decision to save man; in faith man's decision to know God conforms with God's decision to be known. Man as the subject of the knower conforms himself in obedience to God as the object revealed; or rather God as object conforms man as subject to Himself.³

¹C.D., I/1, p. 273. Barth is here rejecting the idea that man retains the image dei after the fall. It still remains an open question, I think, whether or not he has refuted himself by the analogia relationis of Volume III. If man outside of faith resembles God in an analogous way, then perhaps he can know God outside of faith if the principle holds true that we can know what we resemble. (The fact that C.D., III/2, in which the analogia relationis is discussed at length, is not available in English is the reason that this concept is not dealt with in this thesis.)

²Ibid., p. 273.

³Ibid., p. 274.

In terms of man's knowledge of God, this conformity of the knowing subject with the known object is what Barth calls the analogia fidei.¹

The analogy of faith is what makes man the "silhouette" and "imitation"² of God's electing, acting love, and it is this resemblance between the knower and the known which makes knowledge of God possible. It is in faith's "following"³ of its object that it can acknowledge, recognize, and confess its object.⁴ God gives us this faith so that we can respond to Him and conform to Him. "He is the One Who will appropriate us, and in so doing permit and command and therefore adapt us to appropriate Him as well."⁵

According to Barth, to know God is to have faith in God; to have faith in God is to be obedient to God; to be obedient to God is to resemble His decision to be known; to resemble His decision to be known is to know Him; to know Him is to have faith and so on around the circle. Notice this circular movement in the following passage in which he describes the analogy of faith:

¹C.D., I/1, pp. 279 f.

²C.D., IV/1, p. 104.

³Ibid., p. 742.

⁴Ibid., p. 758.

⁵C.D., II/1, p. 188.

Knowledge of God is obedience to God. Observe that we do not say that knowledge of God may also be obedience, or that of necessity it has obedience attached to it, or that it is followed by obedience. No; knowledge of God as knowledge of faith is in itself and of essential necessity obedience. It is an act of human decision corresponding to the act of divine decision; corresponding to the act of the divine being as the living Lord; corresponding to the act of grace in which faith is grounded and continually grounded again in God. In this act God posits Himself as our object and ourselves as those who know Him. But the fact that He does so means that our knowing God can consist only in our following this act, in ourselves becoming a correspondence of this act, in ourselves and our whole existence and therefore our considering and conceiving becoming the human act corresponding to the divine act. This is obedience, the obedience of faith. Precisely - and only - as this act of obedience is the knowledge of God knowledge of faith and therefore real knowledge of God. 1

According to Barth, therefore, this resemblance of the knower to the known is necessary for knowledge; but in the case of man's knowledge of God, man by himself does not in any way possess this resemblance to God and thus this knowledge of God. Man is conformed to God and knows God only because God has conformed man to let him know Him. The analogy of faith is given by God's grace; it never becomes part of man's possessions, equipment or capacities. The conformity of faith is "lent by God and lent exclusively for use;" man's faith is neither innate nor acquired.² Since faith is given by God and is not a human possibility, it can not become the basis of an anthropological statement.³ "We have to think of man in the event of real faith as, so to speak, opened up from above. From above, not from beneath."⁴ Since even the man of faith does not

1 C.D., II/1, p. 26.

2 C.D., I/1, p. 272.

3 Ibid., p. 275.

4 Ibid., p. 278.

possess the analogy of faith as his own property, it is certain that natural man lacks this conformity to God which makes knowledge of Him possible.

In this case, as in all the others we have seen, Barth takes the principle which Thomas uses for natural theology and brings it over into his own revealed theology using it to refute natural theology. This is a clear instance of his method. He says 'yes' to the principle of the knower's resemblance to the known object and then says that that is just the reason why natural theology is impossible and only revealed theology is possible because only in faith is there a resemblance.

We have now seen why Barth will not allow natural theology to be the prelude to revealed theology. In his view the fall so damaged man's capacity to know God that he can not rise up to meet God but God must come down to man to impart knowledge of Himself. Because of the fall reconciliation must accompany knowledge of God, and this can happen only in the revelation of God in Christ and not in natural theology. Every reason that Thomas gave to support natural theology: Romans 1:19, f., nature and grace, apologetics, epistemology, Barth turns into an argument against natural theology and argues further that these are reasons for affirming that revealed theology is the sole way in which man can know God. While Thomas could allege that the movement of knowledge was two-fold: man moving up to know God in natural theology and God moving down to man in revealed theology, Barth sees only the one movement of knowledge: that of God in His gracious condescension moving down to man who is

unable even to rise to meet His grace.¹ Consistent with his view of the motion of knowledge is Barth's rejection of Thomas' two layer theological structure and his affirmation of the one layer - revealed theology.

Having seen how Barth attacks Thomas' reason for favoring natural theology, it remains to see how he attacks the methods of natural theology, i.e., the proofs, the via negationis, and the analogy of being.

Barth's position in regard to the proofs of the existence of God was intimated previously² when it was noted that the Church can not even ask the questions, does God exist or is He known? The very essence of the Church is the fact that God has made Himself known in Christ, and since He is known, His existence is assured.³ To prove God's existence by answering the question does God exist? is absurd because anyone who asks the question would have to be outside the Church to ask it and he is not capable of answering it, and anyone who could answer it, i.e., a Christian, can not ask the question because he knows that God has made Himself known and continues to make Himself known. God is self-demonstrating; He is not discovered. Accordingly he says of the proofs:

I don't know whether you can at once see the humour and fragility of these proofs. These may avail for the alleged gods... [but] in the Bible there is no such argumentation; the Bible

¹Barth's view of the downward motion of the knowledge of God is similar to Nygren's view of agape; c.f., Anders Nygren, Agape and Eros, (Philadelphia: 1953).

²Above, p. 68.

³C.D., II/1, pp. 4 f.

speaks of a God Who proves Himself on every hand: Here am I, and since I am and alive and act it is superfluous that I should be proved. 1

The trouble with the proofs which Thomas used, i.e., the cosmological and teleological which begin with observations of creation is that they really do not prove or say anything at all about God; at best all they do is to say something about man. When man sees, for example, that things in creation are moved as in the first proof, he can not compare or relate this movement to God's movement. As God reveals Himself, He is the self-moved being, and this self-movement is totally different from the motivated being in creation. "Our motivated and motivating being" Barth says stand in contradiction to the "one and only being that is self-motivated."² Man knows only the movement which is common to him as to all creation; he knows nothing of God's movement which is different from man and all creation. Man can project his thoughts of movement to the extreme point of his capacities, but they will remain merely his thoughts and his capacities; anything which can be contained by man's conceptions and definitions can not be God; God exists beyond all human constructs; He can not be demonstrated.³ He will know nothing of God's movement unless God reveals Himself. Of this proof and all the proofs in general Barth says:

There is no help to be found even in the strongest and most emphatic underlining of this motivation. We can say 'man' in the loudest tones. We can ground our statements about man on the most profound metaphysical

¹Karl Barth, Dogmatics in Outline, (London: 1957) p. 38.

²C.D., II/1, p. 269.

³C.D., III/1, p. 360.

premises. But this does not mean that we say 'God.' By this very act we perhaps again and more emphatically say 'man' in distinction and opposition to God. In fact with this exaggeration we really say 'sinful man.' Sinful man - according to God's revelation - is man exalting himself, and thinking that by his own efforts he can realize and assert the being of God.

1

Barth, therefore, opposes Thomas' use of the cosmological and teleological arguments to prove the existence of God, but he puts himself in more definite opposition to Thomas by aligning himself with Anselm and the ontological proof² which Thomas rejects.

He approves of Anselm's proof because it starts with the idea of God received in revelation rather than with an idea of creation which is supposed to yield an idea of God. Anselm who knew God by revelation found it "logically and morally impossible" to entertain any thought that God did not exist.³ Barth says that the only legitimate proof is the one which follows and is obedient to God's own self-demonstration of His existence in His revelation. When God reveals Himself, He shows that He exists, and He commands that man describe His activity and existence as He has revealed Himself.

Barth can say in unison with Anselm, credo, ut intelligam. He definitely does not think that Anselm's proof can be included in a natural theology. He says that Anselm is not starting on neutral ground with natural reason; he is starting with faith

1 C.D., II/1, p. 270.

²Barth says in C.D., II/1, p. 4: "I believe I learned the fundamental attitude to the problem of the knowledge and existence of God which is adopted in this section - and indeed in the whole chapter - at the feet of Anselm of Canterbury, and in particular from his proofs of God."

³C.D., III/1, p. 360; c.f., C.D., II/1, p. 305.

and his proofs are a rational examination or analysis of what he believes. He says of Anselm:

There can be no question of his occupying a position where faith and unbelief have equal rights... For speaking to the Jews and heathen, he attempts - in the form of sound theology - to make the faith as such intelligible to them, as grounded in itself and rational. He speaks with artless simplicity. He is not the right man to appeal to as the patron saint of natural theology.

1

Anselm's proof is good and right, Barth thinks, because his behavior as a thinker is harmonious with what he asserts to know about God. He first believes in God Who has met him in revelation and then he subjects himself to God's authoritative commands. By such an attitude the thinker not merely asserts in theory but actually makes recognizable in his behavior the being of the God Who transcends him. This thinking "is a thinking moulded and penetrated by the transcendent reality of God to the extent that it is a thinking obedience to this God. In the subjection in which it is itself formally a witness to the transcendent existence of God, it can then develop the recognition of His existence as an element of the acknowledgement in which it is confronted by God."²

Here again something which Thomas uses for the purposes of natural theology, Barth takes over to use in revealed theology. In this case, he rejects the proofs which are used in natural theology, but he endorses a proof which can be used in revealed theology. Thomas uses a proof to lead reason to faith; Barth

¹C.D., II/1, pp. 92 f.

²C.D., III/1, p. 361.

allows a proof to be used to show faith reasoning itself out. The proof does not strive to reach a conclusion of God's existence as it did with Thomas; rather the proof presupposes God's existence and argues the reasons for the presupposition.

Following the proofs, Thomas used the via negationis to describe in a negative way the character or attributes of God. This method of describing God proceeds by eliminating any creaturely imperfections or limitations in the name attributed to Him. Barth finds two faults with this use of the via negationis.

The first fault arises from the fact that it presupposes a separation between God's being in itself and God's activity among men for their salvation. When the via negationis is used in natural theology, it deals with God's being as it transcends the world; the discussion of God's gracious activity with and for man is discussed later in revealed theology. As it is used to describe God's transcendent being, the via negationis sifts out all creaturely connotations from the names of God because it is attempting to show how God is absolutely distinct from creation. This negative emphasis on God's nature in relation to creation presents a false notion of God because He is also and simultaneously the God Who lovingly acts in and for creation. God's being is, therefore, not totally negative to creation because He also comes to creation. Furthermore, although God is distinct in His being from creation, He is also distinct from creaturely limitations in His loving action in creation. The negative aspect can not be reserved exclusively

for use in regard to God's being; it must also be applied to His action. In other words, the negative aspect must not completely color one aspect of God so that by saying that God's being is distinct from creation, He is seen to be standing in a totally negative relation to creation; and it must not be restricted for use exclusively in the one aspect and not used at all in the other, but it must be applied in a limited way to both the being and the activity of God.¹

The second fault which Barth finds with the via negationis is basically that rather than freeing God from finite and creaturely limits, it merely speaks of creatures and their limitations. The via negationis gets off to a bad start because its beginning point is man and his limitations rather than God. Man can establish with great metaphysical precision his limited and defined condition. He can see that his space and time are infinitely limited. But, asks Barth, "have we really said anything about God?" Man is talking only about himself and negatively at that. He is merely defining everything which is distinct from God and which says nothing about Him.

For if the finite is in fact limited by the infinite, the opposite inevitably holds good too. Every finite thing and every sum of finite things may in fact be only a drop in the ocean of the infinite, yet this ocean too, in all its infinity, is only what it is through these drops of finite things.

2

¹C.D., II/1, pp. 346 f.

²Ibid., p. 466.

In his own theology, Barth alleges that without committing the faults of which the via negationis is susceptible, he is able to assert that God is not limited by finitude, space, and time and he is able to conclude that God is infinite, omnipresent and eternal. Let us select the attribute of eternity for a specimen of his procedure.

He begins with God's eternity and compares it with time. Eternity includes beginning, succession and end which occur simultaneously in duration. Because eternity is the "prototype and foreordination of time,"¹ time also has a beginning, middle and end, but in time they are separated and distinct from each other occurring differently as past, present and future.²

He maintains that eternity can not be properly understood as timelessness or as the negation of time. Eternity is positive in regard to time; in fact, it includes time. In Jesus, God became time.³ That God became time is a fact which at once refutes both the idea that God is merely non-temporal and the idea that God is limited by any sort of eternity which could prevent Him from coming into time. God is free in His eternity.

Furthermore, God's becoming time also shows that God is not limited by time. In a passage which shows at the same instant both God's positive and negative relation to time Barth says: "Our created time is not of such little value, and in its

¹C.D., II/1, p. 611.

²Ibid., p. 608.

³Ibid., p. 616.

creatureliness it does not have such independence or autonomy over against the eternal Creator, nor do we have it for ourselves in such a way, that God is prevented from causing it to be His own garment and even His own Body."¹ God is superior to time; He is master of it. "He re-creates it and heals its wounds, the fleetingness of the present, and the separation of past and the future from one another and from the present."² He distinguishes Himself from our time, or positively, He turns our time into His real time. "Real created time acquires in Jesus Christ and in every act of faith in Him the character and stamp of eternity."³ God is Lord of our time not by His rejection of it but by His embracing it. God's eternity distinguishes itself from the world's time; it is not conditioned by time rather eternity conditions time because it "rules before time, in time, and after time."⁴ "God and eternity must be understood as the element which surrounds time on all sides and therefore includes its dimensions."⁵

In using a radically modified via negationis, Barth shows it can not be used to completely eliminate from the attribute the creaturely counterpart of the attribute; (in the example, time from eternity). This is true because God acts amongst and

¹C.D., II/1, p. 616.

²Ibid., p. 617.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 619.

⁵Ibid.

for His creatures. It may be used to distinguish the attribute from its creaturely counterpart; (in the example, real time or eternity from created time). This is true because He is superior to the creation in which He acts. But it must also be applied to God's being itself (as distinct, if possible, from His action): God's transcendent attributes can not limit Him; (in this case, God in His eternity is free to come into time).

Karl Barth's severest criticism of Roman Catholic natural theology is aimed appropriately at its most vital factor which is the analogy of being. We have seen that the analogy of being is of central importance to Roman Catholic natural theology because every positive characteristic of God that can be known by natural means depends entirely upon the legitimacy of making analogies between the Creator and the creature. At the very beginning of his Dogmatics - in fact in the preface to the Prolegomena, Barth makes his position clear in regard to the analogy of being; in a typically excited and categorical denunciation, he says, "I regard the analogia entis as the invention of Antichrist."¹ To understand his rejection of the analogy of being is to understand, in a large measure, his grounds for rejecting natural theology as a whole.

The root of his objection to the analogy of being is his belief that it maintains an ontological continuity between the Creator and the creature. He thinks that natural theology's claim that it can predicate names for God rests upon the theory

¹C.D., I/1, X.

that God and creatures participate in the same being although in a different proportion - one absolutely, the other relatively. He thinks that natural theology has made being ultimately superior to God because God participates along with creation in this greater category of being.¹ The consequence of this, he thinks, is that natural theology puts God on the same plane as the creatures: the Supreme Being is nothing but an extension of creaturely being; and thus the god of natural theology is an idol which exists merely on the plane of the creaturely.

Accordingly he affirms that the names which natural theology predicates of God are empty and false. We know nothing in our creaturely plane of existence which can give us a clue to God's nature. For example, we can not know what we mean by "lord" when we apply it to God by way of the analogia entis. We know lords and rulers on the creaturely plane, but these notions tell us nothing of God the Lord. We can extend our creaturely notion of lordship into the infinite and we will know nothing of the Lord who rules our souls and our beings on both sides of death.² We know what lordship means only when we know what God's Lordship means. But we can know God's Lordship only by revelation and not by the analogy of being. Thus, if the content of the name has to be derived from outside the analogy in order to have meaning within the analogy, the analogy is a useless impediment. The same applies to the case in which we give God the name of creator. Barth says,

We have no analogy on the basis of which the nature and being of God as creator can be

¹I.C.D., II/1, p. 241.

²Ibid., pp. 75 f.

accessible to us. We know originators and causes. We can extend their series into the infinite. When we reach the point where we grow tired of extending it, we can call that point "god" or "creator." Within the series we can talk presumptuously of creators and creations. But we can as little attain to the idea of the real Creator and real creation as to that of the real Lord and the real lordship. What we can represent to ourselves lies in the sphere of our own existence and of existence generally as distinct from God.

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Again and again Barth says that God can not be known by the analogy of being because He "can not be classified or included in the same category with anything that He is not" and that which He is not is all that He has created. "There exists," he says, "no synthesis in which the same attribute whether being, spirit, life or love, can be predicated in the same sense both of God and of something else; in which, therefore, God is to be an element embraced with other elements in the one synthesis."² We can not put God as one element in a series which have a common denominator because God is free from and independent of all other elements and of the series. Therefore, being can not be the third term or common denominator which comprehends and is higher than God and creation. God can not be known by the analogy of being because the idea of the ontological continuity between God and creatures which is necessary to this analogy is not true.

Since he rejects the Roman Catholic method of predicated names of God, how does Barth solve the problem of giving the same names to God which he also gives to creatures? Barth uses

¹C.D., II/1, p. 310.

²Ibid.

analogy, but he uses it in two different ways than it is used in the Roman system. In the first place, he says that analogy is possible through revelation - but only through revelation; analogy is conferred by God's grace and it is not naturally inherent in creation. In the second place, he uses the analogy of attribution rather than the analogy of proper proportionality which is used by Roman Catholic natural theology.

Human words can have no similarity to God as object of these words except in so far as God creates the similarity by the grace of His revelation. Human words are naturally directed to creaturely objects and as such they are in no way analogous to God Who is wholly different from creation. What makes human words analogous to God is that God becomes objective for man in revelation and He directs our words to Him as object; and then they are filled with proper truth. Words about God are bestowed in revelation; before revelation our words refer only to creatures; after revelation they refer to God. In His revelation God elevates "our words to their proper use, giving Himself to be their proper object, and therefore giving them truth."¹

For example, the words "father" and "son" do not first and properly have their truth at the point of reference to the underlying views and concepts in our thought and language, i.e., in their application to the two nearest male numbers in the succession of physical generation of man or of animal creation generally. They have it first and properly at a point to which as our words, they can not refer at all, but to which, on the basis of the grace of the revelation of God, they may refer, and on the basis of the awful claim of God the Creator they even must refer, and therefore, on the basis of this permission and compulsion, they can actually

¹C.D., II/1, p. 230.

refer * in their application to God, in the doctrine of the Trinity. In a way which is incomprehensible and concealed from us, but in the incontestable priority of the Creator over the creature, God Himself is the Father and the Son... And, in the same way, "Lordship is not first and properly what we know as the exercise of power by man over man but the Lordship of God exercised and revealed in Jesus Christ." 1

When he describes in technical terms how a word can be predicated of both God and creature, he employs the analogy of attribution.² He says that the word or name applies intrinsically only to God and only extrinsically to the creaturely analogate. The creaturely object can be given the name only as it stands in a relationship with God, and God is entirely responsible for the relationship in which the secondary analogate is allowed to stand. Apart from God, this relationship would dissolve and the creature would not have the predicated name because it is in no way intrinsic to the created object. By themselves human words refer only to creaturely objects; they do not inherently express anything similar to God. Only when these words have been lifted up by God's grace because they have been brought into fellowship with God by His revelation do they express anything similar to God. By grace God creates the analogous quality of these words which they did not naturally have. Our words become true because of the "divine disposal or bestowal" of revelation.³

Earth rejects the analogy of proper proportionality because he denies that the name predicated of both creature and

1 C.D., II/1, p. 230.

2 For this discussion see C.D., II/1, pp. 237 - 243.

3 Ibid., p. 241.

God is intrinsic to each. He says that there can be no likeness merely on the basis of the fact that both creator and creature exist because the creator and creature are totally different. What causes the analogy is not something like being which is intrinsic to each but grace which is intrinsic only to God and extrinsic to creatures. Thus he affirms the analogy of attribution whereby the proper meaning of the name is found first in God in Whom the name is intrinsic, and by extrinsic denomination we can see the analogy or likeness of this name in created objects. For example, we know what Lordship is when God reveals Himself to us because Lordship is intrinsic and proper to God, and then by reference, we can see that earthly rulers are analogous to God's Lordship.

Barth's use of analogy permeates his entire Dogmatics. Besides providing for the use of analogy with regard to human words and their similarity to the divine object, he employs analogy to explain the relationship between God and man who has been conformed to God in the analogy of faith. He says that the Christian is not equal or identical to Jesus Christ,¹ but he is the "analogatum, the parallel, the likeness" of Jesus Christ.² The Christian is this likeness in many ways, but most profoundly he is like Christ in that the morphology of redemption in both is analogous. For example, while Christ died once to overcome the Fall, the Christian modelling himself in conformity to Him in Whom he believes also overcomes the effects of his own

¹C.D., IV/1, p. 771.

²Ibid., p. 770.

fall.¹ But this likeness is only derived; it is not something man can bring about himself; the Christian's shape of salvation "is subsequent and in the deepest possible level subordinate to" Christ's.² The Christian can overcome his sin only because Christ has done it for him on Golgotha and God fills him with the grace which enables him to appropriate the salvation in himself.

But whether the analogy exists in the words of the Christian or in the lives of the Christian, Barth maintains that the only real analogy is the one "which is posited and created by the work and action of God Himself, the analogy which has its actuality from God and from God alone, and, therefore in faith and in faith alone."³ Moreover to prevent anyone from emphasizing the subjective element of faith as a factor in analogy, it is best to think of Barth's idea of analogy as the

¹C.D., IV/1, p. 770.

²Ibid., p. 776.

³C.D., II/1, p. 83. There is a possible inconsistency in Barth's concept of analogy in terms of his thesis of the analogia relationis discussed in C.D., III. He says that man being created in the image of God naturally has the quality of being open to other men in an I-Thou relationship in a similar way in which God has the quality of being open to Himself in the modes of His Trinity and to His creatures. He manages to remain at least superficially consistent with what he has said elsewhere about analogy, by saying that while this analogy is natural to man, he does not realize the image (or the potential likeness does not become actualized) except in faith.

analogy of grace rather than the analogy of faith.¹

Barth's most inclusive criticism of Roman Catholic theology - one which bears on all his previously mentioned criticisms - is that it is a synthesis of natural and revealed theology - two distinct ways of knowing God.² In the first place, he thinks this synthesis was unnecessary because there should never have been a distinction made in the ways of knowing God.³ We have seen that he rejects natural theology - the way of man by his own capabilities reaching up to knowledge of God; and we have seen that he endorses revealed theology as the only legitimate and proper way of knowing God - the way of God reaching down to man in spite of man's incapacities. Thus the division is wrong because there is only one way of knowing God.

In the second place, this division in the ways of knowing God is wrong because it leads to the attempted partitioning of the concept of God. In the Roman Catholic system, natural theology discusses God's being as the Creator, and revealed theology discusses God's action as the Redeemer. The concept of God's being is discussed in natural theology without reference to the concept of God as Redeemer which is postponed for discussion later in revealed theology. The great error of this division of the concepts of God and of the postponement of the discussion of God's action is that it turns natural theology's

¹Barth uses both terms but the analogy of grace conveys his thought less ambiguously.

²C.D., II/1, pp. 79 f.

³Ibid., p. 79.

concept of God's being into an idol. When God's being is discussed without reference to His action, His being is looked upon in abstracto. When God's being is seen in the abstract divorced from the concrete events of His work in which He reveals Himself to man, His being becomes supreme being and finally Being itself. This Being is then set over against the being of man and creation whereupon the analogy of being is set up. As we have seen, Barth believes that the analogia entis provides an ontological continuity with creatures whereby God is placed on the same level of being with creation. Although He participates in being to a vastly greater degree than the creature, God in His abstract being is nevertheless comprehended together with the being of creatures, and thus this being is just another possibility within the realm of the creaturely. As such God's being is an idol.¹

The third point of this last inclusive criticism is that Roman Catholic theology synthesizes these two concepts of God derived from these two ways of knowing God. Having divided the concepts, the Roman Catholic theologians know they must put them back together. This means that the abstract being of God known in natural theology is equated with the God who is known in revealed theology - the One Whom Barth considers is the real God. This third step, he considers, is the blasphemous step. What is being done is that natural theology's idol is made equal to God.

Only Barth's words can adequately summarize this criticism:

¹C.D., II/1, p. 81.

The intolerable and unpardonable thing in Roman Catholic theology is...that there is this splitting up of the concept of God, and hand in hand with it the abstraction from the real work and activity of God which He has in common with us and all being... which means the introduction of a foreign God into the sphere of the Church. The fact that knowability is ascribed to this god, apart from revelation, is in no way surprising. In itself it is even quite proper. This god really is knowable "by the natural light of human reason and created things" apart from God's special help. But to affirm that the true, whole God, active and effective, the Head and Shepherd of the Church, can be knowable in this way is only possible if He has already been identified with that false god... Quite apart from grace and miracle, has not man always had what is in relation to the being of the world the very "natural" capacity to persuade himself and others of a higher and divine being? All idols spring from this capacity. And the really wicked and damnable thing in Roman Catholic doctrine is that it equates the Lord of the Church with that idol and says of Him the very thing that would naturally be said of it. This is the decisive difference between them and us... We reject [their theology] because it is a construct which obviously derives from an attempt to unite Yahweh with Baal, the triune God of Holy Scripture with the concept of being of Aristotelian and Stoic philosophy.

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Barth does not fall into the errors which he attributes to Roman Catholic theology. He maintains one way of knowing God and no other. Having his ontology consistent with his noetics, he does not divide up his concept into two separate

 1 C.D., II/1, p. 84. Barth's mentioning the Aristotelian and Stoic concepts of being brings up a very interesting side issue in the difference between him and Thomas. One of the reasons Barth objects to this classical concept of being which Thomas inherits and endorses is that it is static and impersonal - a neutral concept in which perfection is seen as rest. This kind of being Barth feels, I think, is incapable of acting. That is why he refers to it so often as an idol (c.f., Isaiah, 40). Barth thinks of being as dynamic and more personal (C.D., II/1, p. 231). The dynamic concept of being is congenial with the contemporary world picture; as such it is just as dated as Aristotle's concept. Even the Roman Catholic theologians are describing God's being in metaphysics in dynamic language. C.f., Anderson, The Bond of Being, pp. 334 f.

sections. His idea of God is the God Who is, has being, and exists in His activity, works and ways. God's being for Himself and His being for us are identical. "God is" means both God's essence and His activity. A fact which dramatically expresses his desire neither to divide the way of knowing God nor to divide the concept of God is that he begins his Dogmatics with a discussion of the Trinity. By beginning with this doctrine he shows that he has room for revelation alone - no natural theology allowed. In this way he also shows that he holds the idea of God's being and His activity together in one concept which is that God's being is triune because He acts in three modes of being. God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is known as the Creator only as He is simultaneously known as the Redeemer.

A CRITIQUE OF KARL BARTH'S
REVEALED THEOLOGY AND ROMAN
CATHOLIC NATURAL THEOLOGY

This last chapter presents an evaluation of Barth's criticism of Roman Catholic theology together with some comments and conclusions on the problem of revealed and natural theology.

Although a strenuous effort was made to cover it up, Barth's exegesis of Romans 1:19, f., which enabled him to find sanction for revealed theology over against natural theology is frankly confusing, inconsistent, and almost fraudulent. His aim is to say that there can be no knowledge of God except as it is revealed in Jesus Christ, and yet as a Biblical theologian he must reckon with this passage which has traditionally been used in support of a general knowledge of God from creation. In particular, he has to contend with the sentence in which Paul states that all men are without excuse before God because they have known Him in creation. On the one hand, therefore, to show that there can be knowledge of God only through Christ he says:

It is not the case that Paul was in a position to appeal to the Gentiles' possession of a knowledge of the invisible nature of God as manifested in creation... In his proclamation of Jesus Christ he could not let it appear even momentarily that he was speaking of things which were already familiar.

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On the other hand, to show that all men have knowledge of God so that they are without excuse he says:

¹ Id., I/2, p. 307.

God was revealed to them from the very first. The world which always surrounded them was always His creation and spoke of His great works and therefore of Himself. Judged objectively, even when they also denied and betrayed the truth, they always stood in a positive relationship to it. 1

He tries to weld these inconsistencies together by a pseudo-paradox, i.e., a con-fusion of ideas. He says that only after the crucifixion and resurrection can anyone know that the Gentiles and all men actually knew God outside of the revelation in Christ, but only in the revelation of Christ is it apparent that the Gentiles' religion is one of unbelief and that they really did not know God.

This adverse criticism of Barth's exegesis of this passage is by no means unique. David Cairns, in his book The Image of God in Man, says in the midst of his attack on Barth's exegesis that it is "an exegesis of the first two chapters of Romans which, I believe, has never been put forward by any earlier scholar."² Paul Althaus says of Barth's exegesis of the passage that it is an "act of pure despair."³

The problem is not that Barth disagrees with Thomas' understanding of the passage. He is correct in saying that the passage means that God is known by revelation, and he is correct in disallowing an exegesis which would lead to an interpretation favoring natural theology whereby man by his reason

¹C.P., II/1, p. 120.

²David Cairns, The Image of God in Man, (London: 1953), p. 201.

³Paul Althaus, Die Christliche Wahrheit, I, p. 48, quoted in G. C. Berkow, General Revelation, (Michigan: 1955), p. 48. C.f., Emil Brunner, Revelation and Reason, (Philadelphia: 1946) pp. 77 - 80.

alone could achieve knowledge of God from creation. St. Paul undoubtedly had in mind revelation rather than a natural theology when he said in verse 19: "What can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them." Rather the problem is that Barth interprets this passage as saying that this knowledge which all men have of God has to do with the special revelation in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and not with a general revelation in creation which is available to all men. The fact is that in this passage Paul is just not saying what Barth says he is. What Paul is saying is that all men - confronted by the Gospel or not - know God because He has shown Himself to them in His creation.

It seems that Romans 1:19, f., put Barth on the defensive. He felt compelled to twist Paul's words around so that they said what he wanted them to say in order for them to be consistent with his general thesis of special revelation. Had Barth been rational when exegeting this passage, perhaps he would have been more honest, and then he would have admitted that Paul did not say what he, Barth, wanted to say about revelation in creation. How much better it would have been had he approached this passage in a forthright manner showing how his thesis differed from what Paul was saying and giving sound reasons - which his reasons are in this case - for his disagreement. By doing what he did, he undercut one of his main points - that the knowledge of God is master of men and not that men are the masters of the knowledge of God. When Barth twisted this

passage in the Bible - which he would affirm is the word of God - he makes himself liable to the same condemnation which he hurls at the natural theologian, i.e., trying to master the word of God. Ideally if Barth had followed his own preaching, he would have read this passage before he constructed his theology, and he would have let the Bible conform his theology. If he had let the Bible speak rather than Barth, he would have dropped his limited view that there is only a special revelation, and he would have said that there is at least some sort of general revelation.

For the purposes of the next criticism we may combine two topics which were previously treated separately: nature and grace, and the fall and the knowledge of God. The problem is whether man must be re-created as a knowing partner by God's grace in order to know God. Thomas said man could have a fragmentary knowledge of God without being re-created by the grace of God's revelation; Barth said that because of the fall man had to be re-created by the grace in revelation in order to know God.

Both theologians have gone wide of the mark for several reasons. Both are under the false impression that there is such a thing as a natural man. Thomas also mistakenly thought that man could know God without being changed. Barth mistakenly thought that only the saving knowledge of Christ made man a God-knowing subject.

There is no such thing as a natural man in the sense of man who does not know God or of man of whom there is doubt that

he knows God. Every man knows God by the grace of God in His revelation - at least in His revelation in creation if not in His revelation in Christ. That every man knows God from the very beginning of his existence is the only reasonable explanation of the fall; man had to know God in order to reject Him. Moreover, man does not become natural man after the fall. After the fall man still continues to know God. Some show that they know Him by their continued fall whereby they manifest their knowledge of God by participating in His wrath. Others show that they know Him by responding to Him in Christ whereby they are raised from the fall.

Furthermore, this knowledge of God is given by grace, and since all men have some knowledge of God, there is no one outside of the province of God's grace. Both Thomas and Barth know this but they forget it in the critical places. There is no such thing as a man remaining neutral to or unchanged by God's grace - all are transformed. Thus, as opposed to Thomas, there is no such thing as unaided reason or a natural knower who is not effected or changed in his status as a God-knowing subject. Man will always be changed as a knower of God; either he will continue to be perverted as a vessel of wrath following the path of his original transformation or he will become changed into a vessel of love. In opposition to Barth it must be said that not just Christians are re-created by God's grace - all are re-created even the heathen who by their own will refused God's grace and are thereby transformed into the image of Satan. Therefore, neither theologian should act surprised at the fact

that God's grace changes and re-creates all nature and all men.

If both theologians would remember that either negatively or positively grace and nature are inseparably involved and that all men know God and all are affected by this knowledge, they could stop arguing about the wrong question and begin to argue about the right one. The question is not whether or not grace affects nature; the question is what makes the positive response to grace's effect on nature different from all the other effects of grace upon nature?

If the question were asked in this way, it would make possible a more correct view of the relation of grace and nature in a man who has received God's revelation. The relation of nature and grace in a Christian differs from all other cases because the Christian accepts or responds favorably to God's will to make Himself known as Lord, and thus there is a harmony of wills instead of two opposed or antithetical wills as there are in all other relations of nature and grace. Since in the case of a Christian's knowledge of God there are these two wills which are at one, the Thomistic view applies in one sense because there is a both-and relationship; nature and grace cooperate; grace does not obliterate nature as Barth tends to see it. In another sense Barth's view applies because grace is the superior partner. Grace is responsible for the relationship since God has always been offering it and the Holy Spirit has always been urging the acceptance of it. Furthermore, within the relationship it is always God's will that is being done and not man's, and it is always by God's grace that His will

is done and it is not by man's capabilities that God's will is done. Therefore, it is not so much that grace draws out the perfections of man's nature as Thomas sees it; it is rather that grace creates a new order; man is being helped to obey a supernatural will or command, and this is Barth's view.

Following from this problem is the knotty question of whether or not knowledge of God and reconciliation with God are coincidental. Barth says they are; Thomas says that reconciliation or salvation do not occur simultaneously with all knowledge of God, e.g., natural knowledge does not give salvation.

Consistent with what has already been said, it must be added that knowledge of God - far from necessarily containing salvation - all too often involves damnation where damnation is understood as the rejection of God. However, all knowledge of God is meant to be reconciling and saving knowledge - that is the way it is offered by God. Whether or not this knowledge is saving or damning depends on man's response.

This interpretation would allow a general knowledge of God on the part of all men. This general knowledge would hold all men accountable and without excuse for their lives before God. It would explain the fall as the rejection of God as they knew Him. It would show how men could have some fragmentary knowledge of God without having appropriated the reconciliation wrought in Christ. It would explain why some men can appropriate God's revelation in Christ more easily than others because they have in some way anticipated the knowledge of God's saving love from His general revelation before they have been helped to understand more fully by the Christian missionary. It would

emphasize the constancy and faithfulness of God's love by showing that the knowledge of Himself which He offers is always saving knowledge; and it would point up the great difference between general and special revelation by showing that only in the latter are revelation and reconciliation coincidental because man has accepted God's offer of salvation.

The next consideration is the apologetic problem of whether there is a criterion outside of faith + reason, for example - which would be authoritative for both Christians and heathen as a standard for judging the Christian knowledge of God. Thomas says reason can convince the heathen of certain truths of God. Barth says only in faith is there knowledge of God and this can not be judged or understood from the outside.

The fundamental point in discussing the difference between Thomas and Barth on this topic is that they have decidedly different pictures of what the nature of the knowledge of God is. Thomas speaks of this knowledge as the communication and conceptualization of truths or propositions about God. Barth speaks of this knowledge as the communion between two subjects in a divine-human encounter. Thomas would say that knowledge of God occurs when man believes that God does or is such and such. Barth says it occurs when man believes in God Who is and does such and such. Thomas emphasizes assent; Barth emphasizes trust.

The way in which the knowledge of God is described will affect the consideration of the apologetic problem. If, with Thomas, it is affirmed that knowledge of God is a truth to be grasped by reason, then it is unconceivable not to think that reason is a criterion on which to judge the knowledge of God.

According to this picture of the knowledge of God can there really be any other standard but reason? This is, however, a shallow understanding of our knowledge of God because we Christians know more than truths about God; we know God Himself. God gives Himself to us in revelation and we meet Him, accept Him, and know Him in faith. Reason, of course, plays its role along with emotion and will in receiving God's giving of Himself, but the total experience of knowing God is faith. Only faith adequately describes man's knowledge of God. If this is so there can be no criterion outside of faith which can judge, challenge, or understand this knowledge.

At this point it might be asked if man's knowledge of God by general revelation would provide a suitable criterion. It would be urged that this knowledge too is a type of faith if only the opposite of faith, i.e., 'un-faith.' It is true that all of man's knowledge of God is a form of faith: even the fall arose from a type of faith because man met God and decided not to love Him since it would provide a giving of himself in return which he was not prepared to do. However, unbelief is not a suitable criterion for judging the Christian knowledge of God except in so far as it provides an antithesis, except as it shows precisely the opposite of what the Christian knowledge of God is all about. Except for this, unbelief is entirely unsuitable as a criterion because it concerns man and his will; the standard of unbelief is man in anxiety, man running away from ultimate reality. Except in antithesis, unbelief can not be juxtaposed to belief which concerns a real meeting and atonement of God and man, which concerns both God and man in an harmonious relation.

Barth is right, therefore, when he says that the only way to understand faith is to come into the relationship of faith. The knowledge of God which a Christian has in faith can not be understood from a position outside faith. The Christian must not mask his faith for Barth's reasons which are recorded above; all he can say to the non-believer is repent and believe.

This is not to say that the Christian can not discuss his knowledge of God with an unbeliever. The Christian can and must do this. But, it will be like someone explaining to his younger brother what it means to be in love: the younger brother will not really know what he is being told, most likely he will be bored or revolted, but perhaps he will gain some inkling of what it is about from a past experience and more surely when he has the experience of falling in love himself, he will remember what he was told and will know that he is having a genuine experience of love. The Christian can tell the unbeliever about his knowledge of God, but he can not convince him of this knowledge. He can not even make him understand this knowledge. He can tell him about it and the unbeliever will have only the most fragmentary perception of this knowledge because of his previous rejection of it. Perhaps he has been brought into the proximity of faith before and so he will have more understanding of what the Christian is saying. Certainly when the Holy Spirit leads him into the sphere of faith, he will recall the words of the Christian and know that he is on holy ground.

The job of the apologist is to clear away any misunderstandings the unbeliever might have about God; to speak un-

ambiguously from the position of faith without hiding the fundamental presuppositions of that position; and to speak in contemporary thought forms. This latter point is the crux of the whole endeavor. The unbeliever will not be able to perceive the full meaning of the content with which the apologist fills these contemporary thought forms. He will merely understand the resemblance of the real meaning as it is reflected in the thought form, but if the apologist uses the thought form properly, it will have an analogous meaning to the meaning which the believer is attempting to convey.¹ Thus the unbeliever will be brought into the proximity of faith. To bring the unbeliever as close to faith as possible and to make him as susceptible to faith as possible by stripping away unnecessary misunderstandings and stumbling blocks is the least and the most that the apologist can do. He can not bring the unbeliever into faith. Only God can do that. The situation may be compared to the closing of an electrical circuit; two wires representing the opposite poles of the circuit must be stripped of all insulation and brought into the closest proximity in order to facilitate the leap of the spark which will close the circuit, but the circuit will be closed only when the leap takes place.

With regard to Barth's epistemology and his criticism of Thomas' epistemology not much need be said at the present. His analogy of faith will be criticized below. His idea that God's

¹For a more complete discussion of the believer's language see below on analogy.

revelation is mediated by sacraments is the only possible idea which is consistent with the thesis that God is known only by revelation. One criticism of his sacramental theology is his willingness to see a discontinuity between the outward and visible form or sign and the inward and spiritual grace or truth symbolized. The outward sign must be consistent and continuous with what is being signified in order for there to be a sacrament or a symbol. Certainly Jesus of Nazareth was continuous with the Son of God. For one among many reasons he was significant because he stood in the line of both the old and the new Israel - in him the old covenant culminated and the new began.

What can be said about there being a prelude to revealed theology? Certainly Barth is right in rejecting natural theology as a prelude to revelation. But Barth is wrong in thinking that there is absolutely no prelude to the revelation in Jesus Christ. He does say in one place that there are signs and tokens in the history of Israel which point toward the revelation in Christ,¹ but he does not think these are genuine events of revelation since the prerequisite of revelation - reconciliation - is lacking. Certainly in the history of Israel there are events in which God has actually revealed Himself; in fact, the Old Covenant has traditionally and correctly been classified as special historical revelation. Within Israel there were men with faith and divinely illumined minds who were able to receive

¹Revelation, pp. 63 f.

God's self-manifestation, and while this happened without the reconciliation which God brought about in Christ, there was a foretaste of this reconciliation which enabled the Israelites to know God and which followed from their knowledge. The tragedy of Israel is that they forsook this foretaste of revelation and reconciliation; nevertheless this tragedy was part of the drama which prefaced and introduced the knowledge of God in Christ. In addition to this prelude, there is the preamble of general revelation. All men have known God, and all have rejected Him. This fact set the stage for the God-man and without it there would have been no drama of atonement. The fall and repentance are the inevitable prelude to the Christian knowledge of God.

With regard to the methods of knowing God, we find ourselves once more in major agreement with Karl Barth over against natural theology. The fact that he can reject natural theology and can still keep the methods of natural theology (although he modifies them) to include in his revealed theology is one of the reasons his doctrine of the knowledge of God is powerful and exciting. His radically modified use of the via negationis is absolutely brilliant. A few detailed remarks must be made, however, on his use of the proofs and the analogia entis.

His endorsement of Anselm's ontological proof is logically consistent with his thesis of revealed theology. His adoption of the proof enables Barth's reader to have a feeling for his entire theological enterprise: he sees that Barth is following his own theology in that he is obeying the divine command to spell out and interpret in a reasoned and clear

exposition what he has been privileged to know in revelation. The ontological proof is the symbol of the way in which a revealed theology like Barth's can understand itself and can make itself understood. That Barth accepts the ontological proof poses a challenge to anyone who would say that Barth has completely thrown reason out in his doctrine of the knowledge of God.

Since he can courageously discuss the proofs which have traditionally been associated with natural theology and can even take one of them into his system, it is strange that he could not also have modified and incorporated the cosmological and teleological proofs. He could have taken these proofs into his system if he had said with Professor Wolf that they, like the ontological proof, are "the transposition" of faith "into a philosophic key. The Christian doctrine of Creation and Providence underlies the cosmological argument that nature must have a first, efficient cause and the teleological argument that world exhibits patterns of purposiveness."¹ These proofs, just as much as the ontological proof, are valid only when the basic presupposition of faith is made unambiguously clear.

Barth's criticism of the Roman Catholic concept of analogy must be closely scrutinized since the concept is of great importance to Roman Catholic natural theology, and Barth's criticism is of great importance to his distinct position in regard to natural theology.

¹William J. Wolf, Man's Knowledge of God, (New York: 1955) p. 157.

It must be said, first of all, that Barth has drastically misunderstood the particular concept of analogy which the Roman Catholics hold. Time and again he objects to their concept on the grounds that it places both God and man under the common denominator or comprehensive category of being which embraces them both. By accusing them of this ontological continuity, he implies that the Roman Catholics are using an analogy of inequality. He is really saying that they are using being as a genus in which God and man both participate although to differing degrees. Thus he can say that any name which they predicate of a creature and God is idolatrous because the name is merely creaturely; for example he can say that they are saying that man and God are alive in the same sense and then he can rightly denounce this kind of analogical predication. But the Roman Catholics explicitly deny that they use the analogy of inequality. They say with Barth that the analogy of inequality allows only univocal predication. They say that because this type of analogy leads to univocal or generic predication, it is not a true analogy.

The Roman Catholics use the analogy of proper proportionality which affirms that there is a similarity between God and creation in spite of the fact that they exist in two utterly distinct modes. To assure the distinction between the Creator and creature, they employ the analogy of attribution as a complement to the analogy of proportionality. The analogy of attribution which is applied (virtually though not formally) points out that the creature is dependent and derives its being from

God and that God is self-subsistent and independent from His creation. They can not even be accused of saying that the proportion of the dependent being of the creature to the creature is equal to the proportion of the self-subsistent being of God to God. They say that the proportion on the left side is proportionate and not equal to the proportion on the right.

The analogy of being which they do affirm allows them to predicate a name of God because of the likeness of creatures to Him, but this likeness is only one of proportion according to the distinct modes of being; it is not a one to one relationship as Barth implies.

To criticize Barth's own use of analogy, we can only reiterate and complete the criticism of the analogy of attribution as analogy which was made earlier. The main fault in the analogy of attribution is nothing else than its key property and that is the aspect of extrinsic denomination. The name predicated of different analogates is not really common to both the prime and the secondary analogates; it belongs intrinsically only to the prime analogate. As in the example previously noted, the term "healthy" belongs only to the animal and not to the diet; diet is called healthy only because our minds are able to refer that name to it because it is somehow related to the prime analogate: for example, in this case, the diet is related to the animal because it contributes to the health of the animal.

The consequence of the extrinsic denomination is that we do not really know anything about the intrinsic and formal

quality of the secondary analogate. For example, we know nothing more of diet than we did in order to set up the analogy, namely that it contributes to the health of the animal; we do not know anything about the diet itself - not even why it contributes to health. In the case of Barth's analogy of attribution, therefore, the logic of his position drives us to the conclusion that, in the first place, the term denominated is not held in common or shared by man and God, and, in the second place, that we know nothing about the nature of the secondary analogate. The consequences of this are rather drastic. Take the term "righteous,"¹ for instance; Barth must say that man does not have his own righteousness if he maintains the analogy of attribution. If man does not possess righteousness intrinsically because of Christ, then it appears that God's work in Christ has been in vain. If all that can be said is that man can be called righteous only by association with God's righteousness, and God has not filled him with righteousness, then man's righteousness is superficial. Moreover, in regard to man's righteousness, we are just as much in the dark as when the analogy was proposed. We know nothing at all of the inherent quality of man's righteousness; all we know is that it depends upon or is produced by God's righteousness.

¹I have been helped in my entire argument by John McIntyre's article "Analogy" previously cited and in particular by his example of the term righteousness which brings the fault of Barth's analogy of attribution into sharp focus. C.f., p. 16.

The analogy of attribution which Barth choses to adopt does not do justice to what he really means.¹ It seems to me that without violating his central thesis of the analogy of grace, he could express more completely what he wants to say by using the arrangement of analogy which the Roman Catholics use. If he would combine the analogy of attribution with the analogy of proper proportionality as they do, he could show that while the term predicated of the secondary analogate is dependent upon God, the analogy holds because the term is intrinsic to both God and the creature. In this way, he could continue to say that man's righteousness is totally derived from and subordinate to God's righteousness and also that man is actually righteous in a proportionate, creaturely way.

By combining these analogies, he would also avoid an inconsistency in his concept of the analogy of faith. Barth vacillates between the opinion that faith is intrinsic to the Christian and the opinion that it is extrinsic. On the one hand, he says that faith is neither "innate nor acquired."² On the other hand he says "Christian faith is a free human act."³ Had he combined the analogies he would not only have avoided the inconsistencies but also he could have said what he wanted to say - and sometimes did say - without being disloyal to his analogy of attribution. He could have said that faith is intrinsic to the Christian and also that faith is dependent upon

¹McIntyre, Analogy, pp. 15 f.

²C.D., I/1, p. 272.

³C.D., IV/1, p. 757.

God's grace. If faith is intrinsic to man, there is a genuine conformity and a genuine analogy of faith because man actually is in common with God; he has something which makes him like God. He is not like God merely by extrinsic denomination, but he is actually brought into a relationship with God whereby something inside himself or rather his whole being as the being of faith is in conformity to God.

A further criticism is that when applied in general to the language about God, Barth's analogy of attribution is an easy target for those who would criticise it as an attempt to construct a holy or sacred language. At this point Barth must abandon his analogy of attribution because words describing God become ridiculous. For example, if we call God Lord because we know from revelation what lordship is and if we use the analogy of attribution, there is no real relationship between God as Lord and any earthly monarch as lord. There really is nothing in common between the heavenly and the earthly lordship except that the heavenly lordship created the earthly lordship. The point is that there is nothing intrinsic in the earthly lord which would give us any reason to call God Lord. Therefore, if a Christian using the analogy of attribution spoke to a non-Christian, the non-Christian would not have the slightest notion of what the Christian was saying. The Christian alone could see the connection between the heavenly and the earthly lord; there would be no intrinsic connection between the two and so the non-Christian would not even be able to understand the analogous meaning of the Christian's words. On the other hand, if the

Christian used the combination of the analogy of proportionality and attribution, the non-Christian would at least have a partial understanding of the Christian's message. In this case too, the Christian alone would know the completely pregnant meaning of his words because he had received the meaning in revelation, but the words which he used to convey this meaning would have some intrinsic relation to the original prime meaning. For example, there would be something intrinsic in a human lord which would lead the Christian to call God Lord. And while the non-Christian would not know the complete meaning of God's Lordship, he would at least know that God was like an earthly lord and that his knowledge of an earthly lord was helpful to him in understanding God's Lordship. Besides knowing that God had created the earthly lord, the Christian would also know that He had endowed that lord with something of His lordship. Therefore, the Christian could point to the earthly lord with the assurance that the non-Christian would understand him in an analogical way: the non-Christian would know God not exactly as the Christian knows God, but he could have a similar or reflected knowledge of the more complete knowledge. The non-Christian can only understand the real meaning of the Christian's language about God when he comes into the Church and becomes conformed to God in the analogy of faith. Outside of the Church, the non-Christian can have only an image of the Christian's knowledge of God - but a true and real image of that knowledge nevertheless.

The final consideration is that Barth's criticism of the splitting up and then the synthesizing of the ways of knowing

God and of the concepts of God which take place in Roman Catholic theology must certainly be taken into account in any further statements of the doctrine of the knowledge of God. This criticism summarizes Barth's main thesis in his doctrine of the knowledge of God. He is saying that there is only one way of knowing God and that is by revelation as it is received in faith, and in revelation His being and action are known simultaneously. Since God is known as Creator and Redeemer at the same time, He must be described in the same way as He is known. Therefore, His being and action must be described in cross-reference with each other and not in separate compartments.

Even those who embrace an idea of general revelation can not object to this procedure which Barth follows in his Dogmatics. The advocates of a general revelation must say that while all men do have some knowledge of God from His revelation in creation, this general revelation is non-descript. The knowledge of God which the pagans have is so perverted and fragmented that it can not be systematized. Even if it could, it would be worthless to a Christian doctrine of the knowledge of God because the Christian would be trying to describe the way he knows and understands God; he is not attempting to describe the way in which knowledge of God is perverted. For example, Thomas' natural theology could conceivably be viewed as the knowledge of God which is possible in general revelation, but this could not be taken without modification into a Christian doctrine of the knowledge of God. One reason is that the knowledge of general revelation is not nearly so well-defined as the

knowledge of God is in natural theology. The second reason is that the knowledge of general revelation is not concerned with God as Redeemer. Since the Christian knows God as Redeemer, he could not describe God as pure being without reference to God's redeeming acts. Since the Christian knows God as both Creator and Redeemer, he can not make use of - in fact has no need of - general revelation; all that he needs to and all that he is able to say about God is revealed to him in the special revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

If the doctrine of the knowledge of God is to be Christian, it must be exclusively Christian. Whether a person advocates general revelation or not, he must admit that Barth has given an unambiguously clear statement of the exclusively Christian doctrine of the knowledge of God.

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